

EDUCATION FOR PERSONAL ENCOUNTER:
A THEOLOGICALLY BASED, RELATIONAL APPROACH
TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Beverly Jean Jones

May 1995

Permission to reproduce copyrighted material has been granted for the following:

from The Courage to Be, by Paul Tillich, © 1952 by Yale University Press.

from The Gift of Power, by Lewis Joseph Sherrill, ©1955 by Macmillan Publishing Company, renewed 1983 by John L. Sherrill and Mary Sherrill Durham. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Shuster, Inc.

from On Art and Architecture, by Paul Tillich, edited by John Dillenberger with Jane Dillenberger, © 1987 by The Crossroad Publishing Company.

from Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis, by Thomas H. Groome, © 1991 by HarperCollins Publishers.

from Paul Tillich, edited by J. Mark Thomas, The Spiritual Situation in our Technological Society (Mercer University Press, 1988; \$40.00 Cloth, \$20.00 Paperback), reprinted with permission. Mercer University Press, 6316 Peake Road, Macon GA 31210.

The rights to Guilt and Redemption by Lewis J. Sherrill reverted from John Knox Press to the author who has since died. Every effort has been made to contact the current owner(s) of the rights, without success.

© 1995

Beverly Jean Jones

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

This dissertation, written by

Beverly Jean Jones

*under the direction of _____ Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty Committee

Jacobs Verheyden
Chairman

Mary Elizabeth Mullins Moore

J. Lucian Fisher

Date May 10, 1995

Virginia Suelzli

Abstract

Education for Personal Encounter: A Theologically Based, Relational Approach to Christian Education

By Beverly Jean Jones

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to present an approach to Christian education which is built upon theological education as a decisive foundation for Christian identity. Christian education has an important role to play in helping persons to clarify their understanding of what Christianity is and its contribution to their lives and to the larger world. To this end, the dissertation includes a review and evaluation of two contemporary approaches to Christian education: enculturation and shared praxis. Utilizing Paul Tillich's theological method of correlation, enculturation and shared praxis are critiqued as inadequate for teaching the theological resources of Christianity.

Lewis J. Sherrill's philosophy of Christian education is consistent with Tillich's correlational method, and he extends it to include the personal correlation between human need and divine self-disclosure, which Sherrill identifies as correspondence. Sensitive to the lived experience of students and the power of encounter with Christ to set in motion human transformation, Sherrill's work serves as a guide to developing a correlational correspondence approach for Christian education. Sherrill's emphasis on interpersonal communication, Biblical theology and symbols of encounter are foundational for this approach.

Following Sherrill's concern for articulating the Christian message in relation to the lived questions of human existence, a correlational grid is presented to empower teachers of Christianity to present Christian content

more clearly and to deepen student's lives of faith. Drawing particularly on the thought of Emil Brunner and Paul Tillich, this grid highlights the intersection of faith, hope and love with human anxiety, and identifies the power of God's presence as transformative for human existence. As students engage the meaning and power of existence in light of the dynamics described in this grid, they can come to understand and claim the meaning and power of Christian faith.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1.	Introduction: The Crisis in Christian Identity.....	1
2.	Surfacing Key Issues for Education for Christian Identity	12
	Westerhoff: The Enculturation Approach.....	12
	Schooling-Instructional Model Critiqued	14
	The Enculturation Process.....	15
	Enculturation and Christian Education.....	17
	Components of Enculturation.....	18
	Communal Identity and Multiple Cultures	22
	The Example of Schooling and Pluralism of Cultural Communities.....	23
	Summary	26
	Limits of the Enculturation Approach.....	28
	Thomas Groome: The Shared Praxis Approach	30
	Traditional Educational Models Critiqued.....	31
	Education for Conation	33
	Liberationist Pedagogy	33
	The Reign of God.....	36
	The Movements of Shared Praxis.....	37
	Christian Story and Vision.....	38
	Summary of Shared Praxis	42
	Limits of the Shared Praxis Approach.....	43
3.	Foundations for a Theology of Christian Education:	
	Tillich's Theological Method.....	46
	Tillich's Method of Correlation.....	48
	A Critique of Enculturation and Shared Praxis Based on Tillich's Correlational Method	52
	The Critique of Enculturation.....	52
	The Critique of Shared Praxis.....	55
	Summary.....	57
	Tillich and the Situation.....	58
	Human Being and the Threat of Non-Being.....	58

The Anxieties of Fate and Death, Emptiness and Meaninglessness, and Guilt and Condemnation	60
Examining the Cultural Situation as a Means of Revealing the Types of Anxiety.....	66
Symbols of Estrangement in Social Organization of Technological Society	68
Symbols of Estrangement in the Art of Technological Society.....	72
Conclusion	81
4. Foundations for a Relational Approach to Christian Education: Sherrill's Philosophy of Education	83
Sherrill's Correspondence Approach.....	83
Ministerial Education Critiqued.....	83
Education as Preparation for Encounter.....	86
Revelation.....	88
The Bible.....	91
The Principle of Correspondence and Christian Encounter	95
Conclusions about Sherrill's Correspondence Approach.....	97
Sherrill's View of the Question of the Human Predicament and the Answer of Christianity.....	98
The Question	99
The Nature of the Personality.....	99
The Relational Nature of the Personality	102
The Emotional Dimension of Knowing.....	103
Anxiety and Hostility.....	106
The Answer.....	107
The Reorientation of the Self.....	107
Recognition and Acceptance of the Conflictual Self.....	108
Agape.....	109
Nurturing Relationships	111
Faith in Christ, Transference and Transcendence.....	112
The Unity of the Personality: Bodily Spiritual Life.....	116
Fellowship as Supportive of the Relationships of Faith	118
Summary.....	120
Components of Sherrill's Educational Strategy	122
Two-Way Communication	122

Biblical Drama	126
Biblical Symbols	131
Contributions of Sherrill's Educational Approach	133
5. Developing a Correlational Grid to Guide Education for Personal Encounter	137
Personal Correspondence as Liberating Truth	139
Faith in Christ as Faith in the Presence of God	142
Faith, Hope and Love	144
The Correlational Grid	146
Faith in Jesus Christ as the Incarnation of God in the Past, Correlated with Moral Anxiety	148
Hope in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and His Promised Return as Anticipation of the Future, Correlated with Ontic Anxiety	154
Love as the Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in the Self, Correlated with Spiritual Anxiety	159
Interrelationships within the Grid	163
The Correlational Grid and the Christian Educator	165
6. Using Literature and the Arts in Education for Personal Encounter	175
Using the Correlational Grid to Reveal the Questions of Existence in Relation to the Answers of Christianity	176
Christian Redemption of the Past, Present and Future through the Eyes of Charles Dickens' <u>A Christmas Carol</u>	178
The Correlation of Ontic, Spiritual and Moral Anxiety with Hope, Love and Faith in Two Songs from <u>A Sunday in the Park with George</u>	187
Benefits of Using the Arts and Literature to Explore the Theological Relationships within Correlational Grid	192

Remembering Tillich's Warning about "Religious" Resources.....	192
Conclusion	194
Bibliography.....	198

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Crisis in Christian Identity

Part of the task of every generation of the church is to articulate the meaning of Christianity to the present age in ways that enable persons to grasp its transformative meaning for their lives. The questions of what defines the Christian life and how it may be claimed are challenges which must be faced over and over again if the Christian message is to stay fresh and be a live option for the world.

George Stroup has recognized that questions of defining and of communicating Christianity are crucial issues in the formation of Christian identity. He has also observed a crisis of Christian identity in the churches which is linked to the loss of understanding the meaning of Christian faith and a failure to communicate how the resources of Christianity play an important role in the Christian life. He says:

There is ample evidence in modern culture that Christian faith and identity have become obscure and uncertain and that this hermeneutical problem has become the ecclesiastical and theological crisis of our day. . . . It is no longer apparent to many people what role Christian faith and participation in the life of the church should play in the self-understanding of Christians.¹

Stroup goes on in to build a connection between the loss of Christian identity with the loss of a clear theological tradition that would inform Christian self-understanding. He has identified four symptoms indicative of the crisis in Christian identity that recognize this loss:

the curious status of the Bible in the church's life, the church's loss of its theological tradition, the absence of theological reflection at all

¹ George Stroup, The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 21-22.

levels of the church's life, and the inability of many Christians to make sense out of their personal identity by means of Christian faith.²

These symptoms indicate that the crisis of Christian identity in the church is a theological crisis. Therefore, as Stroup points out, it "cannot be resolved by sociological or psychological analysis."³ Such analysis can only inform the church about certain factors which influence how theology and education might be sensitized to the crisis situation and possibly assist churches in attracting members. The theological response called for by this crisis is less about attracting members than about communicating the meaning Christianity has for human beings, society and creation in ways which establish persons in full relationship with the God and the universe which upholds them. Stroup points us in the direction of taking seriously the theological dimensions of Christian identity as a means of attending to this crisis.

The importance of building a connection between the theological resources of Christianity and Christian identity is supported by the work of Sara Little. In her work on the relationship between theology and religious education Little notes several important functions of theology for building Christian identity. Theology can offer a common language and self understanding in the Christian community. This fosters both identity and a sense of purpose in the community.⁴ Bound together by an exploration of the meaning of theological content, Christians are able to navigate together the diverse waters

² Stroup, Promise of Narrative Theology, 24.

³ Stroup, Promise of Narrative Theology, 24.

⁴ Sara Little, "Theology and Religious Education," in Foundations for Christian Education in an Era of Change, ed. Marvin J. Taylor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), 36.

of personal and social situations in which they find themselves. Theology also serves to inform the processes by which the Christian message is communicated. That is, theology plays an important role in discerning how the Christian message may be at once clearly and sufficiently communicated. In this way theology functions as a kind of norm by which the Christian community can question, evaluate and affirm its program of ministry.⁵ As Christians wrestle with articulating their theology they become more theologically educated and may discover new insights important to strengthening or reformulating their personal and communal identities. Doing theology as well as learning about theology becomes an important foundation for Christian identity.⁶

Little not only emphasizes the importance of theology for strengthening personal and communal identity, but also recognizes the important relationship between theological belief and the life of faith. She develops this thesis in her book To Set One's Heart.

Beliefs which engage the thinking powers of the person as they emerge out of and inform faith, sustained, reformed and embodied by the faith community, can be an important factor in bringing integration and integrity to life.⁷

Defining belief as "an idea held (thought and experienced) to be true,"⁸ Little underscores the importance of ideas as they relate to experience, particularly to the experience of faith.

⁵ Little, "Theology and Religious Education," 37.

⁶ Little, "Theology and Religious Education," 38.

⁷ Sara Little, To Set One's Heart: Belief and Teaching in the Church (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 9-10.

⁸ Little, To Set One's Heart, 16.

Following the thought of David Tracy, Little draws the distinction between faith as a "basic orientation and attitude" and belief as a "thematic explication" of a particular stance of faith.⁹ Christian faith describes the felt trust made possible by "the One who is trusted."¹⁰ Faith establishes the relationship between God and human beings. Beliefs enable expression of the meaning of the experience of faith and "become avenues by which we reinterpret and thereby reappropriate at deeper levels the meaning of the Christian faith."¹¹ Belief involves as sense of commitment to articulating a faith experience. It involves belief in, as well as belief about something or someone. Hence, belief has both a cognitive component and an emotionally based component.

Little explains how beliefs function to support faith. She says beliefs work:

- "to help a person make sense of the world and have a frame of reference for understanding, caring and doing,"¹²
- "to aid a community . . . to achieve identity and maintain continuity,"¹³
- "to link human experience and the Christian tradition through an interpretation that internalizes meaning and gives direction to life,"¹⁴ and

⁹ Little, To Set One's Heart, 16.

¹⁰ Little, To Set One's Heart, 17.

¹¹ Little, To Set One's Heart, 17.

¹² Little, To Set One's Heart, 18.

¹³ Little, To Set One's Heart, 19.

¹⁴ Little, To Set One's Heart, 20.

- "to link lives of individuals and communities to larger ultimate realities and purposes."¹⁵

These functions of belief point us to the inescapable reality that beliefs are of vital significance for experiencing, reforming and deepening in one's commitments born in faith.

Theology involves those reflective processes which help persons to hammer out beliefs which in turn support faith. Theology and belief are as closely linked as belief and faith. Therefore, since belief (and the theological positions which inform belief) play such an important role in faith, and therefore, in establishing Christian identity, the connection between Christian identity and Christian theology needs to be at the forefront of the work of Christian education.

The works of John Westerhoff and Thomas Groome represent two approaches to Christian education which address the need for owned faith and education for Christian identity. Westerhoff has developed an enculturation paradigm for doing the work of Christian education within the broader scheme of Christian catechetical work. The enculturation approach places heavy emphasis on the role of the Christian community as a socializing force through which persons are initiated into the life of faith. While Westerhoff makes room for Christian teaching as instruction and education as critical reflection on one's social context in his overall concern for Christian catechesis, his primary emphasis is on the initiation of persons into the life of the Christian community as a means of forming Christian identity. Participation in the Christian community brings faith.

¹⁵ Little, To Set One's Heart, 21.

While this enculturation approach offers some help in communicating the theological, biblical and liturgical traditions of Christianity in a highly participatory way, Westerhoff's primary concern is that of helping the church to be the primary institution of enculturation in children's lives in the midst of competing institutions with enculturating force in our society. In the enculturation paradigm, Christian identity easily becomes defined as belonging to the institutional church and participating in its culture. The question as to why Christianity is important to the lives of persons is minimized or missing, or is dealt with along solely sociological lines. This emphasis on the formation of Christians through enculturation by the church holds within it the potential for ghettoizing both the meaning of Christianity to the church, and the church from the world. Such ghettoization is at odds with both the church's vocation in the world and with the universal dimensions of the Christian message. A non-ghettoizing approach to education for Christian identity is needed.

Thomas Groome has adopted and developed a liberationist praxis approach to Christian religious education. His educational approach, called shared praxis, places critical reflection on the socio-cultural reality of participants and participation in socially transformative action as key components in the development of education for the reign of God. This pedagogical approach consists of five movements or processes that flow together to enable participants to appropriate critically the Christian tradition "with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith toward God's reign for all creation."¹⁶ The five movement educational process of shared-

¹⁶ Thomas Groome, Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 135.

praxis is designed to express the liberative meaning of the gospel. Groome sees the reign of God as "the comprehensive symbol suggested by the tradition itself" that describes the "heart" of what Christianity means for people's lives.¹⁷ Therefore, Groome uses the symbol of the reign of God to describe the metapurpose of Christian religious education¹⁸ and as the metacriterion of all hermeneutical processes in the shared praxis approach.¹⁹

Inasmuch as Groome works out an effective approach for engaging learners with their own experience, in critical reflection on experience, in gaining skills of interpreting texts, in critically appropriating the Christian Tradition and Vision, and in making intentional decisions and responses for lived Christian faith, his approach is exceptionally helpful in overcoming the limitations of those educational approaches that for all practical purposes leave the learner out of the educational process. In shared praxis, the learner is seen as participant above all and the five movement process is aimed at engaging learners in participation, partnership and dialogue.²⁰ Groome recognizes the need to appropriate critically the Christian message through critical analysis of experience in order to engage the learner in the educational process. In this way Groome hopes to support the reconstruction of experience and relationships through an educational process that provides a means for people to express the reign of God in historic reality.

The limitation of Groome's approach in terms of my concern of education for Christian identity is that Groome collapses the "what" of the tradition into

¹⁷ Groome, Sharing Faith, 228.

¹⁸ Groome, Sharing Faith, 14.

¹⁹ Groome, Sharing Faith, 228.

²⁰ Groome, Sharing Faith, 143.

praxis. That is, he collapses the "what" (content) of Christianity into the "how" (process) in the work of Christian education. The result is that Groome seriously obscures the meaning of Christianity as faith in Christ. He is activist to the exclusion of content. His approach assumes that people have adequate knowledge of Christianity, or that they can easily get it. This presupposes a situation very different from the present reality. By making such an assumption, his approach does not meet the educational needs of the situation of our time.

Groome's work is very helpful in developing an educational process that engages the learner in their own learning process. He includes the important dimension of critical reflection in the process of making faith one's own, and his process engages cultural issues that serve to shape personal identity. He brings an engaging dynamic that opens up the educational process which is left wanting in Westerhoff's enculturation approach. But, Groome's approach insufficiently engages the role of theological content in supporting faith. A clearer explanation of the meaning of Christianity is needed along with an educational approach that integrates this meaning into the teaching-learning process with the issue of Christian identity in mind. An educational approach that makes a clearer connection between Christian identity characterized by faith in Christ and Christian theology is needed.

Lewis Sherrill, a Christian education theorist writing in the period between 1930 and 1957, developed an educational approach aimed at integration of the personality through an integrated approach to ministry.²¹ His philosophy of Christian education recognized the importance of Christianity in the formation and growth of the individual toward wholeness

²¹ Lewis Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955), xii.

in the context of community. He saw that the encounter with Christ has the effect of aligning the personality with the creative self even as it recognizes and overcomes the destructive dimensions of the personality. Seeing the relationship between knowledge of self and knowledge of God, Sherrill understood that the experienced relationship of one's self with God transforms both one's self understanding and one's appreciation of God. Sherrill makes God's revelation, which is central to the meaning of Christianity, central to the work of Christian education. He says:

For when man encounters the Self-revealing God he is confronted, not by a release of fresh divine information to be digested, not by some new and infallible dogma about God, not by a list of new rules to be observed or old ones to be furbished up again; he is confronted by none of these trappings of religion and church-craft, but by a Person who offers himself to us in love and in judgment, and calls upon us to give ourselves a living sacrifice in response. It is a matter of personal communion. If this is the core of revelation, so must it be the core of Christian education.²²

Here Sherrill places the experience of faith in God through Jesus Christ as central to his understanding of what it means to be a Christian. He places the experience of encounter as central to claiming "the power of becoming" that orients the self in a world of competing and disintegrating powers. "The gift of power" is for Sherrill "the power to become a self who can cope with itself in the modern world, and with the world in which we must live."²³ The gift of power is the redemption of what might have been lost to humanity, but is found through the power of God's love. It is the redemption of vitality and creativity in the service of love for all humanity. The liberating, personal

²² Sherrill, Gift of Power, 83-84.

²³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, x.

encounter with God, the gift of power, is to guide the work of Christian education.

Sherrill developed an educational method that kept his psychological and theological concerns in dynamic relationship. His method of correspondence, based in part on the theological method of Paul Tillich, took seriously the questions that arise through human experience, particularly in the struggle for authenticity and personal wholeness. Tillich's insights into the importance of recognizing the fragmentation of the self and of society as expressed in culture are particularly helpful for cultivating the questions to which Christianity offers an answer. Sherrill's method of correspondence also took seriously the answers to the questions of existence as communicated by the biblical witness generally, and in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ particularly. This mutuality between revelation and human need engages the self in personal relationship with God's self. In this educational method the learner is viewed as participant in the learning process, bringing his or her own life experience into the educational process. The themes of Christianity are presented in relation to human needs as a way of opening the learners to the meaning of the larger framework of Christianity, as well as to introduce them to the life of faith.

This approach grounds one side of the correspondence in the human situation and thereby opens a way for engaging the self with the meaning of Christianity in a way that is lacking in Westerhoff's enculturation approach. Bringing the questions implied by existence expressed as human need to the fore of Christian education may help to offer Christianity as a viable option of living religion for persons both currently within and outside the Christian community. Engaging the questions of existence as human need may help to overcome the separatist tendency of Westerhoff's approach which sees

education as primarily enculturation into the Christian community. Additionally, the method of correspondence emphasizes the answer and "call" given in Christianity and thereby, brings a decisiveness to the meaning of Christianity that is lacking in Groome's liberationist pedagogy.

The heart of this dissertation is an approach to education for Christian identity which draws particularly on the theological method and existentialist insights of Paul Tillich and the educational method and psychological approach of Lewis Sherrill. Undergirding this approach is the importance of the human encounter with Christ, which is definitive for Christian identity and serves as the guiding principle for Christian education. In Chapter 2, a dialogue is presented between the enculturation and shared praxis approaches as represented by Westerhoff and Groome respectively. This dialogue is developed in order to identify and clarify key issues that require attention in the process of education for Christian identity and to which my approach will need to attend if it is to make a significant contribution to the field of Christian education. Chapter 3 is an examination of Tillich's method of correlation and his approach to cultural analysis. This is important in order to as important to develop a more integrating approach to teaching the theological resources of Christianity. Chapter 4 is a study of the work of Lewis Sherrill as a source for Christian education. Chapters 5 and 6 build on Sherrill's insights to further Christian education as theological education for personal encounter. Chapter 5 presents a correlational grid designed to guide the work of Christian education. Chapter 6 presents ideas on how the grid may be used to theologically interpret literature and other types of art in ways that support theological education for personal encounter.

CHAPTER 2

Surfacing Key Issues for Education for Christian Identity

The works of John Westerhoff and Thomas Groome represent two approaches to Christian education which address the need for owned faith and education for Christian identity. Both theorists have made significant contributions to the contemporary field of Christian education. Both have made efforts to be inclusive of learners' experiences and personal faith development as significant factors in the educational process. Both have emphasized the power of the Christian community to shape personal experience and one's understanding of Christianity. In this chapter I will explore the work of these two writers in order to surface important issues for my project of developing an approach to education for Christian identity. Toward this end I will outline the basics of their respective approaches and highlight their key contributions and key limitations.

Westerhoff: The Enculturation Approach

John H. Westerhoff, III has worked to bring the insights of cultural anthropology to the work of Christian education. In his earlier work Westerhoff named his approach "intentional religious socialization."¹ He felt it adequately described the holistic nature of education as it takes place through life in a community. As he sharpened his concern to offer an alternative to the schooling-instructional model, he refined and renamed his approach "the community of faith-enculturation paradigm."² He felt this

¹ John Westerhoff and Gwen Kennedy Neville, Generation to Generation: Conversations on Religious Education and Culture (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 42.

² John Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith? (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 50.

name emphasized not only the socialization processes of learning, but also recognized the educational dimension of structures of interaction within the Christian community. More recently Westerhoff has both broadened the scheme of the community of faith enculturation paradigm and renamed it catechesis. Drawing from historic Christian terminology, Westerhoff uses catechesis as the overarching term to describe Christian education, which includes humanistic education, instruction and formation. Catechesis describes the various types of education which go on in the faith community.³ For the purposes of this paper, enculturation remains the best way to interpret his overall scheme of catechesis, as well as to describe the specific category within the scheme dedicated to enculturation processes called formation.⁴

³ Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," Religious Education 82 (1987): 580-81.

⁴ Westerhoff has preferred the term catechesis over Christian education to describe the work of the church in educating in faith for reasons which seem to be in keeping with my concern for education for Christian identity. They are certainly consistent with Westerhoff's concerns and what it is that he wants to take issue with in the both the field and practice of Christian education. Westerhoff prefers catechesis firstly, because it is the term historically used by the church to describe the formation of Christians. This is in keeping with his critique of Christian education adopted the schooling-instructional paradigm from public education. Seeing Christian education as directly related to one's identity found in baptism and to becoming identified with the Christian community, catechesis offers in both language and concept a close connection with the historic Christian community. Catechesis reminds Christians of who they are as a community in contradistinction to other human communities of nation, neighborhood, etc. Additionally, as Westerhoff has articulated in more recent years, the term and concept of catechesis offers a broad framework within which the work of enculturation (or formation), education and instruction can at once be recognized, distinguished and related. By self admission Westerhoff tended to overemphasize the work of enculturation to the exclusion of education as critical reflection and teaching by instruction. Catechesis has become the

Schooling-Instructional Model Critiqued

Early in his writing, Westerhoff recognized an over dependence of Christian education in the twentieth century on the schooling-instructional model. He saw that, by and large, church educators had adopted their educational approach from the public schooling model. It emphasized trained teachers, orderly students, and classrooms filled with tables and chairs and the material equipment associated with that model of education. The emphasis was on how to teach rather than how to learn. Very often teaching was associated with an authoritative stance based on intellectual expertise in the knowledge of the story and subsequent dogma of Christianity. This approach was the standard ideal for most Protestant churches where there was great zeal for seeing the Sunday School as the vehicle for educating Christians in faith. This approach was influential not only in the larger churches with budgets and education professionals, but even in those churches with very few available volunteers to teach and who had little or no formal training in either teaching or religion. Westerhoff challenged the feasibility of this model for most churches.

Westerhoff also challenged the appropriateness of this model for education aimed at teaching, learning and encouraging faith. Having faith, says Westerhoff, is not the same thing as knowing about religion. While knowledge about religion can be taught through the schooling-instructional paradigm, faith cannot.⁵ Faith is the lived human response to the grace and

broader category in Westerhoff's scheme of what is commonly called the church's educational work. For Westerhoff it holds within it the necessary recognition of socialization and intentional enculturation as primary means of communicating Christian faith, while making room for other important processes of catechesis.

⁵ Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith?, 22.

love of God. It can be inspired, encouraged, and nurtured, but it "cannot be given by one person to another."⁶ A paradigm more appropriate to learning the dynamics of faith was needed. Westerhoff responded.

His solution to the problem of educating for faith was an approach more inclusive of theology and the dynamics of the Christian community⁷ than of the latest techniques in information processing and classroom pedagogy. He saw the work of Christian education as more about being with others as a faithful community than about imposing knowledge or behavior on others. Westerhoff called for a shift in the conceptualization and practice of Christian education away from the schooling-instructional model to one of faith enculturation.

The Enculturation Process

As has already been mentioned, Westerhoff has drawn from the field of cultural anthropology to describe his approach to Christian education. Enculturation refers to those "processes and means by which persons are integrated into their social group" with particular emphasis on "the concrete process of learning within that particular culture."⁸ Through the dynamic interaction of the community, persons learn the world view and behavior of

⁶ Westerhoff, Will Our Children Have Faith?, 23.

⁷ Here Westerhoff attends to the critique H. Shelton Smith had raised in his book Faith and Nurture (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1941) in relation to the lack of theology and ecclesiology in progressive religious education approaches. For an insightful treatment of the lack of ecclesiology in liberal theology of the twentieth century more generally, see Jack Verheyden's lecture entitled "The Invisibility of the Church in American Theology and the Issue of Catholic Reality," delivered at Kresge Chapel, School of Theology at Claremont, 25 Jan. 1994.

⁸ John Westerhoff, "Enculturation," in The Encyclopedia of Religious Education, eds. Iris V. Cully and Kendig Brubaker Cully (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 217.

their community first hand. Inasmuch as world view and behavior are learned, growth is initiated at birth and continues throughout life. The culture within which persons find themselves become the context for growth, with growth being shaped by the social structure and values of the community. The processes of enculturation are interactive. On the one hand, the cultural community functions with socializing force to initiate and sustain persons into its meaning and activity. On the other hand, persons come to know who they are through personal interaction across generations in the community. This means, in part, that the way of life of a community is communicated "from one generation to another through formal and informal, conscious and unconscious, spontaneous and planned means."⁹ When this is viewed in linear fashion, enculturation guarantees the continuity of the community over time as it is successful in nurturing an ongoing consensus in the community as to its nature, purpose and way of life.¹⁰ When it is viewed in ways less linear and more interactive, different views, insights and experiences of faith presented in the various generations, help to influence communal identity as a whole.

Enculturation, then, is a process natural to all human communities as a means of passing on their cultures from generation to generation. As an educational model, enculturation capitalizes on the learning dynamics natural to human beings. Since education is distinguished from other social processes, in part by its quality of intentionality, the natural enculturation processes can be seen as an educational approach when they are intentionally recognized and utilized. Learning is a complex process that happens in ways

⁹ Westerhoff, "Enculturation," 217.

¹⁰ Westerhoff, "Enculturation," 217.

that can and cannot be planned for. Feelings, thoughts, attitudes and expectations, as well as perceptions and behavior, are communicated through relational community. Likewise, the content of the community's history, organization, beliefs, ethic and mission permeate the quality of life in the community. They are "learned" in many ways, including observation, imitation and participation in community life. When a community engages in enculturation, as educational paradigm, it does not so much seek to control communication as to include it self-consciously in ways that assist people in learning the values and behaviors supported by the community.

Enculturation and Christian Education

Westerhoff uses these insights of enculturation theory to benefit Christian education, but adapts them to the Christian community in light of the theological foundations of Christianity and the unique character of the Christian community. The Christian community, like all communities, has a culture composed of relationships, styles of being together, ritual and myth that express the identity of the community. By paying attention to these components of the Christian community, the process of enculturation may be intentionalized for the sake of educating in faith.

At first appearance, enculturation and socialization theories view humanity in highly deterministic ways. Indeed, there is a certain behaviorist stream in the enculturation approach. Westerhoff recognizes this and holds this in tension with the power of faith as response to the gift of God. It has already been mentioned that Westerhoff distinguishes faith as lived response from the "purely" intellectual knowing about religion. Faith itself cannot be enculturated. Faith involves both gift and decision. This being the case, no one can teach another person to have faith. The embracing of faith as gift and decision comes from within a person, not from without. What persons and

the community of faith can do is to live out their commitments of faith in ways that invite participation in the community in ways that inspire, encourage and nurture faith. The recognition of faith as response and gift counter-balances the deterministic tendencies of enculturation theory.

The community of faith-enculturation paradigm highlights how the whole of church life educates for faith. As the church fulfills its calling to be faithful in its communal relationship and in its witness as followers of Jesus Christ in the world, it offers an educative community through which faith is understood, becomes an option and makes a claim on persons' lives and in the larger society. In discussing Westerhoff's adaptation of enculturation theory to the faith community, it is significant that he has incorporated faith development theory into his understanding of faith and into his enculturation proposal.¹¹ Difference in the stages of faith of persons in the community, consonant with their psycho-social development, and variation in religious maturity are appreciated as contributing to the growth and discipleship of individuals and the community. Intergenerational relationships support the faith of persons expressed as different stages, recognizing their role in the faith of the community as a whole. Appreciation for intergenerational, interstage faith relationships become part of the fabric that safeguards the ongoing existence of the life of the community. Faith is understood by and incorporated into patterns of living that are passed on from one generation to the next.

Components of Enculturation

Westerhoff has identified a number of components that are particularly important for using the faith-enculturation process in the church. While he

¹¹ For a discussion of stages of faith and their incorporation into Westerhoff's paradigm, see Will Our Children Have Faith?, chap. 4.

uses various terminology to describe them, they can be summarized as: ritual life, role models, environment, orientation and structure of time, interpersonal relationships, social interaction, disciplined behavior, social organization of communal life, and language.¹² While these dimensions are common to enculturation into any community, the intentional practice of enculturation by Christians is an attempt to "shape the subjectivity of persons so that they might be able to feel, think and behave within the context of the Christian tradition which is embodied in symbols, myths and rituals."¹³ Through these planned-for structures of human relationship, persons at all stages of Christian experience can learn to know what it is and how to be faithful. They work to communicate, support and guide persons into a communal identity comprised of persons with Christian faith.

While Westerhoff does not minimize the power of any of these elements of Christian formation, the components of ritual life and role modeling are helpful examples of the specific ways enculturation takes place. Ritual is the fundamental activity that holds a community together and communicates its values. Role models illustrate and invite others into the discipline of faith. It will be helpful to explore these two enculturation processes briefly in order to illustrate the dynamics of the community of faith-enculturation paradigm.

Ritual life, or cultic life refers to "a community's rites – repetitive, symbolic and social acts which express and manifest the community's sacred narrative, along with its implied faith and life."¹⁴ Ritual gives order not only

¹² See Westerhoff's articles "Formation, Education, Instruction"; and "Fashioning Christians in Our Day," in *Schooling Christians*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and John Westerhoff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992).

¹³ Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," 585.

¹⁴ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 272.

to the expression of the narrative it communicates, but it also gives order and orientation to the meaning and purpose of person's lives. Participation in ritual helps persons to internalize the Christian story and to act upon it.¹⁵ This internalization of the story is crucial to Westerhoff's approach to the identity formation of Christians. Echoing the words of Tertullian, Westerhoff reminds us that "Christians are made not born."¹⁶ Ritual life, expressed through the church's liturgical tradition, inclusive of its rites and ritual patterns, assists in creating the environment which in turn informs and forms persons into the character of the community. Rituals hold a community together by shared patterns of behavior and commitments, and serve to express to others its dynamics of faith. The church's liturgical traditions are the primary expression of the ritual life and point to the identity of the church. Inasmuch as the culture of the Christian community shapes the lifestyles of its participants, ritual works both express and to invite people into the community. This being the case, Westerhoff sees participation in the church's ritual life as the heart of Christian formation.¹⁷

How is the ritual life of the church made personally meaningful and accessible to the growing Christian? Westerhoff highlights the importance of role models in teaching Christian discipleship, and he re-names the relationship between teacher and learner as apprenticeship. Westerhoff notes the insight of Vernon Robbin's book Jesus the Teacher, that "Jesus sought and summoned students to follow him, to become companion-apprentices, as in

¹⁵ Gwen Neville and John Westerhoff, Learning through Liturgy (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 96.

¹⁶ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 262.

¹⁷ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 273.

the itinerant tradition."¹⁸ Through processes of identification, observation and imitation,¹⁹ disciples were made and sent out to communicate the faith they had found. Likewise, the early church passed on the faith to others through principles of apprenticeship.²⁰ *Catechumens* were put into relationship with a "master catechist," who represented the community in training persons in the principles and practice of baptism and the Christian life.²¹ Through apprenticeship to the community and to a particular role model in the faith within it, persons practiced and learned the art of discipleship.

This approach to communicating the meaning of Christianity is still useful for today. Westerhoff says,

If a person desires to become a Christian, he or she needs to practice praying the Lord's Prayer, ministering to the poor and needy, and performing other acts basic to being a Christian. He or she also needs to learn a story so that words and actions merge together, shaping the heart, mind, and soul or the apprentice. ²²

Neophyte Christians need the help of others who are more experienced than they, to guide them in these and other basics of the Christian life. The Christian role model, or *master*, guides formation by being with the apprentice in ways that enable the apprentice to learn, practice and understand the meaning and action of faith in the context of the community.

¹⁸ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 270. See also Vernon Robbins Jesus the Teacher (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

¹⁹ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 270.

²⁰ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 271.

²¹ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 271.

²² Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 271.

By observation and invitation at first, and later, by dynamic relationship, new Christians learn incorporate the meaning pointed to by the liturgy of the church into their own lives of faith. The link between doing and knowing is made possible through the apprentice or role model relationship.

The shape of ritual life, apprenticeship along with the other enculturating processes mentioned, are the means by which people learn about and come to identify themselves as part of the community of faith. Through them the Christian story is internalized and expressed in ways that give order and meaning to the idea of faith. Westerhoff realizes that ultimately faith is a decision and this decision is not something that can happen by enculturation. Enculturation rather supports those needs and processes which communicate the nature and meaning of faith in a context permeated with faithful people and faithful ways of being together.²³ As Christian education pays attention to these natural and planned processes of Christian learning aimed at faith, the option of Christian faith is made present to persons and the reproduction of the faith community for the future is made possible.

Communal Identity and Multiple Cultures

Let us now turn to look at Westerhoff's enculturation paradigm in relation to the context of the church in society and how Westerhoff views Christian formation and identity in relation to other cultural identities. The purpose of this discussion is to surface the problems of separatism and ghettoization in the enculturation approach.

In his essay "Fashioning Christians in Our Day," Westerhoff states the importance of understanding the relationship and inter-relationship of the

²³ Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," 591. See also, Westerhoff's article entitled "A Necessary Paradox: Catechesis and Evangelism, Nurture and Conversion," Religious Education 73 (1978): 409-16.

multiple institutions which have the power of enculturation in our society.

In describing his catechetical program, he says:

It is based upon the contention that any faithful catechetical endeavor necessitates an understanding of "church" as an ecology of intentional, interrelated, distinctively Christian institutions that provide an alternative to and are in creative tension with similar institutions within society. . . .²⁴

In order to follow his discussion of the multiple associations persons have, particularly in our pluralistic society, it is important to understand Westerhoff's vocabulary that describes such associations and relationships. Westerhoff makes distinctions between the related terms enculturation, acculturation, assimilation and biculturalization. He defines and differentiates these terms succinctly when he says:

Enculturation refers to the learning of a particular culture; acculturation is the learning and adopting of appropriate behavior in a second culture while remaining fully enculturated in one's primary culture; assimilation is learning a new culture and thereby losing or leaving behind one's original culture; and biculturalization is the blending of two cultures, keeping some learned characteristics of each and in time giving birth to a new cultural expression.²⁵

Westerhoff hopes that Christians will be enculturated into the Christian community and acculturated to other cultural communities within society such as schools, sports, neighborhoods, work environments, etc. To clarify his concerns, Westerhoff offers a discussion of schools and their relationship to the formation of cultural identity.

The Example of Schooling and Pluralism of Cultural Communities

Westerhoff's categories of enculturation are well exemplified in his discussion of the enculturating power of schools in our society. He explores

²⁴ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 262-63.

²⁵ Westerhoff, "Enculturation," 217.

the influence of public schooling upon the efforts of Christian communities to pass on their faith as the primary agent of enculturation to the next generation. Westerhoff explains his concerns about making diversity into an ideal for education in the context of American pluralism, particularly as it relates to issue of religious pluralism. He notes Thomas Green's strategies for developing a pluralistic society: "structural assimilation," "insular pluralism," and "half-way pluralism."²⁶ Structural assimilation encourages cultural blending which in effect results in an open society and not a pluralistic one.²⁷ Structural assimilation corresponds to Westerhoff's definition of assimilation. Insular pluralism describes social relations that are limited to one's own group, be it defined by ethnicity, race, culture or religion.²⁸ Insular pluralism corresponds to Westerhoff's word, enculturation. Half way pluralism takes into consideration the difference between primary and secondary associations, encouraging actions that affirm the status of each.²⁹ Half way pluralism corresponds to Westerhoff's term, bi-culturalization. Green supports this third option.

Westerhoff contends that Green's proposal of half way pluralism may be a helpful way to attend to cultural, ethnic and racial diversity, but that it is basically unreasonable as way of adequately communicating religious convictions. Westerhoff warns that since religious commitments involve matters of "truth, conviction and commitment," and are not only matters of "opinion and private individual concern," those concerned to attend to issues

²⁶ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 264-65.

²⁷ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 264.

²⁸ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 264.

²⁹ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 265.

of religious education and identity must develop ways of approaching pluralism in ways consistent with those convictions.³⁰ To advocate half way pluralism in public schools may be an injustice to the requirements of religious formation and even to religious pluralism. All institutions enculturate, particularly schools. Westerhoff points out the fact that students by age twelve have spent more time in school than with one's family members and church community combined. Westerhoff suggests that the time may have come for Protestant Christians to develop a system of parochial schools that would further strengthen the processes of Christian formation. Half way pluralism may compromise Christian enculturation.

Westerhoff suggests that Christian communities be self identified as counter-cultural communities that offer Christian witness to the surrounding culture rather than risk losing their identity by participating fully in it. The suggestion that Christian communities consider developing their own system of parochial schools to insure the primary enculturation of its members in the church³¹ is an extension of the identity of church as counter-culture. Westerhoff wants persons are to be enculturated into the Christian community; his hope is that this would be the primary ethos to engender Christian identity and loyalty. Westerhoff has in mind the tensions between the potentially competing loyalties of patriotism and Christian faithfulness when he focuses his attention on the counter-cultural enculturation approach to education for Christian identity. He does see the importance of participation in society at large, but he proposes that people be acculturated, into the associations of this larger context while keeping their identity

³⁰ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 263.

³¹ Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians," 281.

grounded in the Christian community.³² This would allow persons to participate in the larger society without permitting the values of that society to be overly influential to the personal identity and commitments of Christians.

The threat currently facing the enculturation of Christians who are educated in the public schools, according to Westerhoff, is that they will be: (1) enculturated or assimilated into society with the primary identity being that of U.S. citizens, and (2) acculturated to religious expectations of the larger community, but lose the sense of "self-identity as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his church," or (3) bi-culturalized, or in Green's terms structurally assimilated. Unable differentiate between being a Christian as a member of the church in the larger secular culture and being a Christian in terms of style of faith and life,³³ persons experience no distinction between the values of the church and those of the community. Contrary to these threats to Christian identity, Westerhoff proposes that churches become well defined communities with schools of their own and self identified as counter-cultural communities. By making this move Westerhoff believes that churches can more fully educate for Christian identity and make a meaningful contribution to the world.

Summary

As I have attempted to show, two of Westerhoff's primary concerns are that the community of faith be able to reproduce itself for future generations and that the church be the primary institution of enculturation in persons'

³² Recall Westerhoff's definition of acculturation previously quoted: "learning and adopting appropriate behavior in a second culture while remaining fully enculturated in one's primary culture."

³³ Westerhoff, "Formation, Education, Instruction," 585.

and that the church be the primary institution of enculturation in persons' lives, especially in the midst of competing institutions in our society. With these concerns in mind, Westerhoff has revealed how the schooling-instructional paradigm of the Sunday School was inadequate to the educational needs of Christian communities of varying wealth and size. He suggested a community of faith enculturation paradigm as a more appropriate model for the church.

Enculturation is the means by which the community maintains its identity and passes that identity on to the next generation and to those persons who come to participate in its life. In this view, Christian identity is defined as belonging to the church and participating in its culture. While Westerhoff makes note that Christian faith involves both human decision and God's grace, as well as participation in the community, his view of Christian identity is weighted toward a cultural understanding of faith. Faith is expressed through participation in the community and conforming to its standards for belief, character and behavior. Christian identity is understood primarily as belonging to the institutional church and participation in its culture.

Westerhoff is clear that the Christian community is a unique community built through the recognition and practice of unique principles. Westerhoff contends that the church is able to maintain the boundaries necessary for a clear identity and also communicate its message with the world through its alternative lifestyle and counter-cultural identity. While Westerhoff's enculturation paradigm is grounded in insights from cultural anthropology, he applies them with particularity to the Christian community. This approach is well suited to educating people for cultural particularity, while attempting to remain conscious of the relationship of secondary

(institutional) relationships in the identity forming process. Enculturation has the strength of educating persons into a clear Christian identity based on participation in the Christian community. It offers a means of communicating the theological, biblical and liturgical traditions of Christianity in a highly participatory way.

Westerhoff has offered a viable alternative to the schooling-instructional model of Christian education to teach Christian meaning, character and behavior. He has also provided a means to understand how the Christian identity of a community can form the Christian identity of an individual. When the Christian community is the primary community of enculturation, its values and customs that are different from other cultural communities are sharpened. In this way persons learn what values, character and behavior are fitting to them as members of the Christian community. They learn to see how, and how not to, align themselves with those outside the community.

Limits of the Enculturation Approach

The enculturation approach makes some assumptions that are dangerous if it is to faithfully fulfill its tasks. The first assumption is this: It assumes that persons, even within the Christian community, have a grasp of the questions to which Christianity offers answers. It focuses on passing on the traditions through which faith is made both possible and meaningful without offering a format for persons to ask the critical questions that make the tradition helpful. The dynamic engagement of the question of why Christianity is important to the lives of persons and to the world is minimized or missing, or is dealt with along solely sociological lines. Persons need assistance in cultivating their questions that come from many areas of life both inside and outside the church community. To assume persons are making meaningful connections between what they experience in the

Christian culture and in the culture offered outside the church simply by enculturating them into the life of the church is to make a significant error. Persons do not always make those connections, and as a result they may stay in the church for reasons unrelated to Christian faith; leave the church because they do not know why it makes any difference to be there; continue in their multiple associations, keeping them independent of each other; or so inmesh their multiple associations that they cannot see the distinctiveness and contradictions. None of these options points adequately toward claiming faith as personally and socially transformative. Education for Christian identity must engage persons with why Christianity is important and how it offers a helpful contribution to living.

A second dangerous assumption is this: that identifying the church primarily as counter-culture will necessarily help it to be a meaningful witness in "the world." While there is no doubt that the church has had in various times and places important influence as a counter-cultural community, it is equally true that such counter-culture has also found itself ghettoized from rather than witnessing to the world. The counter-cultural approach assumes that people outside its boundaries care about what it is doing or thinking or being. In addition to this, it too easily slides into making a distinction between "us" and "them." While the us or them approach does offer assistance in establishing cultural identity through boundaries, it loses sight of the common humanity of all people. To forget this is to err on the side of separatism.

The potential of separatism for ghettoizing the meaning of Christianity to the church, and ghettoizing the church from the world, must be overcome if the insights gained from the enculturation approach are to be of help in establishing authentic Christian identity. If the church community designs its

world in such a way that it does not recognize or reflect the surrounding culture, then bridges of understanding between the culture and the counter-culture may be washed out. Rather than being a witness to the life of faith to the world, such a counter-cultural community becomes more and more meaningless and confusing to the "outside" world. Likewise, the church loses its opportunity to appreciate the insights of other communities and persons beyond itself that may helpfully inform Christian life and faith. A non-ghettoizing approach to Christian education is needed.

Thomas Groome: The Shared Praxis Approach

Thomas H. Groome's liberationist-hermeneutical approach to Christian religious education is relevant to this discussion of education for Christian identity. His approach overcomes some of the ghettoizing tendencies of the enculturation approach to education. Groome recognizes, as does Westerhoff, the pivotal role of participation in the Christian community for education for Christian identity.³⁴ And yet, Groome brings to the overall work of Christian socialization a critical hermeneutic that engages persons in the "leading out" work of humanistic education.³⁵ Humanistic education can be defined simply as the critical appropriation of tradition with an eye toward growth or change of persons and the tradition that shapes them.

Groome's approach, called shared praxis, places critical reflection on the socio-cultural reality of participants and participation in socially transformative action as key components in the educational process. Rather than extending or intensifying enculturation theory, Groome brings an

³⁴ Groome, Sharing Faith, 26.

³⁵ Thomas Groome, Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 108.

important dimension to socialization approaches that assist them in being more open, dynamic and changing.³⁶ In a 1977 article "The Critical Principle in Christian Education and the Task of Prophecy," Groome examined socialization theory and method, and raised the concern that

if our methods of Christian formation do no more than "sustain" or "insure" that our culture continues" then, given the reality of what we have, "intentional socialization" alone would defeat the very purpose for which we Christians are called to educate.³⁷

Christian education promote openness and critical thinking if it is to communicate the message of Christianity with relevance to the contemporary situation. By engaging persons in critical reflection and action, Groome's liberationist-hermeneutical approach to Christian religious education makes a step in this direction. Let us look more closely at Groome's approach in order to consider his contribution to education for Christian identity.

Traditional Educational Models Critiqued

Groome, like Westerhoff, is critical of the models of education that put learners in the role of passively receiving the authoritative tradition of the Christian community from the "all knowing" teacher.³⁸ Additionally, traditional models of education have over emphasized the intellect to the exclusion of one's whole being. It has disconnected knowing from being, even as the philosophical thought that has often informed them have separated epistemology from ontology.³⁹ Groome has also recognized that the

³⁶ Groome, Christian Religious Education, 108.

³⁷ Thomas Groome, "The Critical Principle in Christian Education and the Task of Prophecy," Religious Education 72 (1977): 265.

³⁸ Groome, Sharing Faith, 142-43.

³⁹ Groome, Sharing Faith, 37.

language used to describe the work of education has been less than helpful in liberating education from these problems.⁴⁰ Education has drawn on the cognitivist language that has defined knowledge in the West and therefore has had a tough time in liberating itself to more holistic approaches to knowing. The problematic epistemological tradition that Groome points to is one that separates being from knowing, splitting agency from subjectivity in the person. This has led education to develop approaches that minimize the power of both human agency to affect the whole being of a person.

Groome has suggested that the work of Christian religious education be reoriented through a different approach to epistemology. He tries to reform the language by putting forth what he calls epistemic ontology.

I sometimes use the term *epistemic* ontology to reflect our educational interest and to signal my central conviction that epistemology and ontology, "knowing" and "being," should be united in the philosophical foundations of Christian religious education. Though ontology remains the noun and the thus the primary focus, the modifier *epistemic* reflects the educator's interest in enabling people to attend to the consciousness that arises from their whole "being" as agent-subjects-in-relationship. And I will often use this latter phrase to indicate how participants are to be both engaged and formed by religious education; it is to honor and empower people as agent-subjects-in-relationship.⁴¹

In his effort to reunite knowing and being in education, Groome renames the task of Christian education as conation.⁴² Rather than developing his model along traditional lines which emphasize knowledge "out there" to be put "in here" (in human intellect), Groome sees education for wholeness as uniting

⁴⁰ Groome, Sharing Faith, 26.

⁴¹ Groome, Sharing Faith, 8.

⁴² Groome, Sharing Faith, 26.

human agency and subjectivity through religious education. In this way education is "a transcendent, an ontological, and a political activity."⁴³

Education for Conation

Groome redefines the task of Christian education as conation. Recognizing the number of ways conation has been used in literature of varying types through history, Groome defines conation simply as wisdom. By using the term conation, Groome develops a way to conceptualize an epistemic ontology to re-image the work of Christian religious education.⁴⁴ It is inclusive of various aspects important to developing Christian identity or character, through the work of informing, forming and transforming.⁴⁵ By choosing to view participants in Christian religious education as "agent-subjects-in-relationship," Groome emphasizes the importance of: (1) learners as their own resource for authority and action, (2) learners as people who react as knowing subjects to the environment in which they find themselves, and (3) the role of social relationships in engaging of the self toward the learning and growing involved in wholeness. These commitments about learners (or participants as he prefers), underlie and guide Groome's education for conation. Indeed, they describe key components of the pedagogical approach of shared-praxis as means of implementing education for conation.

Liberationist Pedagogy

While Groome's approach to Christian religious education is a unique contribution to the field, serving to correct some philosophical flaws that the

⁴³ Groome, Sharing Faith, 11.

⁴⁴ Groome, Sharing Faith, 9

⁴⁵ Groome, Sharing Faith, 32.

fields of education and religious education have inherited, it is important to see his work in the context of the contemporary theological and pedagogical traditions as well. The most central contemporary foundations for Groome's approach come from liberationist perspectives. Brief recognition of this foundation may be helpful in understanding Groome's contribution to religious education.

The influence of Paulo Friere, Brazilian educator, is clearly evident in Groome's shared praxis approach. Friere sees the work of education as engaging learners with their own experience for the transformation of the social structures which shape human experience. Identifying the aim of education as humanization, Friere emphasized the same concern for agency and relationship that is prominent in Groome's work. Groome's definition of religious education as political activity particularly reflects Frierian commitments.

Specifically, Groome has incorporated several of Friere's concepts into his own approach. In his book Sharing Faith, Groome specifically names Friere's concepts of praxis, generative theme, culture of silence and decodification.⁴⁶ Praxis is the exercise of action and reflection that emerges through dialogue about the human situation, which is by definition political activity. As we shall see in the next section, Groome defines his work by this concept of praxis that Friere has raised.

Praxis as educational activity assists persons in breaking out of the "culture of silence."⁴⁷ Friere realized in his work with uneducated farmers in Brazil that they had been socialized into believing their words had no value. They

⁴⁶ Groome, Sharing Faith, 484, n. 1.; 156-59, 184; 491, n. 26, respectively.

⁴⁷ Groome, Sharing Faith, 184.

believed that only certain kinds of persons carried authority and they waited for the authorities to tell them what to think and how to live. By incorporating a dialogical, praxis mode of learning, Friere developed a liberative pedagogy that helps persons name and claim their own experiences as authoritative and in doing so, helps them to break their culture of silence. This dialogical approach is evident in Groome's movements of shared praxis.

In order to get persons to begin to name and claim their experience as an important contribution to humanization, Friere developed the use of generative themes to initiate the educational process. A generative theme is a theme, issue or question that will draw people into discussion because it is important to their daily lives and overall existence. Groome points out that "a generative theme is one that is readily identifiable for these participants and is likely to engage them personally."⁴⁸ Friere discovered the power of generative themes through his literacy project with a group of Brazil's peasant farmers. He found that as these persons were able to see the connection between their lived world and the words that describe them they became more interested in learning to read. The generative theme helps to get discussion started and focuses participants toward personal involvement in the educational process. Groome uses generative themes for similar reasons in his approach to religious education.

As a generative theme is introduced and dialogue is activated among participants, Groome incorporates Friere's activity of codification and decodification. Persons are encouraged to identify a concrete symbol that represents their experience and to work with it to unveil the values and commitments that underlie the power of their experience. As we will see in

⁴⁸ Groome, Sharing Faith, 156.

looking at the movements of shared praxis, this interpretive work in the process of education that Groome has adopted from Friere's liberation pedagogy is important to the work of education for wisdom.

The Reign of God

The theological category or image which Groome uses to inform education for conation is that of the reign of God. While an emphasis on the reign of God is not unique to liberation theologians, Groome draws heavily on liberation theology for understanding the reign of God and its relevance for Christian religious education. Groome sees the reign of God as "the comprehensive symbol suggested by the tradition itself" that describes the "heart" of what Christianity means for people's lives.⁴⁹ He uses this symbol to describe both the metapurpose of Christian religious education and the metacriterion of the hermeneutical processes of shared-praxis. While the symbol of the reign of God has been used exclusively and statically in the Christian tradition, Groome sees its potential for describing inclusively and activity. As he sees it, the reign of God

evokes both God's intentions for and God's activity in history; it symbolizes God's intentions of peace and justice, love and freedom, wholeness and fullness of life for all, and for the well-being of creation (shalom), and it symbolizes that God is active in partnership with human agency to effect these universal intentions.⁵⁰

Groome highlights the work of modern scholarship that identifies the reign of God as central to Jesus teaching and preaching. Groome emphasizes that the disciples of Jesus were and are in

covenantal partnership with God and one another, with responsibility to bring forth its (reign of God) fruits. His disciples are to do God's will

⁴⁹ Groome, Sharing Faith, 228.

⁵⁰ Groome, Sharing Faith, 17.

on earth as it is done in heaven by following Jesus' way of life and living in right relationship with God, others, selves and all creation.⁵¹

This emphasis underscores Groome's commitment to persons as historical agents in the world to do God's will. Christian religious education is to keep this ever at its center and create pedagogical principles that are consonant with this calling and responsibility. Shared praxis is to be understood as a pedagogical contribution to the reign of God.

The Movements of Shared Praxis

Groome sees how the shared praxis approach is not new or unique to Christian religious education. It involves processes natural to human development and human relationships. The movements of shared praxis draw on the natural critical capacities of human beings to reflect intentionally on behavior or action so as to become more aware of the principles shaping it, and to facilitate changed action. Combining this natural capacity for critical reflection with the natural curiosity of inquiry, an activity becomes educational as these capacities become self conscious and intentional for participants in the educational process.

Groome outlines these movements for the educational enterprise as follows:

Focusing Activity

Movement 1 - Naming/Expressing "Present Praxis"

Movement 2 - Critical Reflection on Present Action

Movement 3 - Making Accessible the Christian Story and Vision

Movement 4 - Dialectical Hermeneutic to Appropriate the Christian Story and Vision to Participants' Stories and Visions

Movement 5 - Decision/Response for Lived Christian Faith.

⁵¹ Groome, Sharing Faith, 17.

The focusing activity is either a contrived or real event in the lives of persons or the world through which a generative theme emerges. In movement 1, the teacher encourages participants to describe "what happened" or "what is going on" in regard to the generative theme that is drawn out in the focusing activity. In movement 2, the teacher raises the critical question: why did what happened happen? This helps participants to consider their own view and activity in relation to the generative theme. In movement 3, the teacher presents "appropriate" material from the Christian tradition (Story/Vision) that may speak to the generative theme. In movement 4, participants reflect on how the Christian tradition challenges them to change their lives through their action and reflection on the generative theme. They are also encouraged in this movement to understand how their own action and reflection challenges and changes the tradition itself. This involves creating a dialogue among participants so as to develop an interpretation of Christianity that is applicable to lived experience. Movement 5 raises the question of "What am I (we) going to do, now?" It calls forth decision and changed action. The flow of these movements may vary, and move back and forth. What is important for Groome is the dialogical and interpretative nature of the movements for engaging learners as "agent-subjects-in-relationship" who incarnate the liberative activity of the reign of God.

Christian Story and Vision

Groome admits that his shared praxis approach is an approach to religious education more generally, though he sees Christian values reflected within it. He sees that most any religion may be taught through the educational processes of shared praxis. As a Christian religious educator Groome talks about shared *Christian* praxis. But, depending upon the religion to be taught,

the religious specificity can vary. In the preface to Sharing Faith Groome explains that he hopes his approach can be a

resource for religious educators far beyond my mainline Christian community and perspective. From personal experience and conversations with Jewish and Unitarian Universalist religious educators, I am particularly convinced of the potential of a shared praxis approach in those traditions. . . . Clearly too the commitments and dynamics of shared praxis can be honored in education that is not overtly religious.⁵²

In the movements of shared praxis, the specific religious tradition is represented in movement 3 of the process.⁵³ In shared *Christian* praxis the teacher is to present what Groome calls the "Christian Story and Vision" to participants. He therefore titles movement 3 "Making Accessible Christian Story and Vision."⁵⁴ He says:

As participants have critically interpreted the "text" and context of their lives, so the educator now brings critical hermeneutics to the texts and contexts of Christian Story/Vision, to make it accessible (movement 3) and to prompt participants to critically appropriate its meaning and truth to their lives (movement 4).⁵⁵

What is the Christian Story and Vision of which Groome speaks? What is the Christian Story and Vision that is to be expressed in movement 3 of his shared Christian praxis approach? Groome uses Story as a metaphor to describe what the church refers to as scripture and tradition.⁵⁶ Christian Story indicates "the whole faith tradition of our people however that is

⁵² Groome, Sharing Faith, 3.

⁵³ Groome, Sharing Faith, 216.

⁵⁴ Groome, Sharing Faith, 215.

⁵⁵ Groome, Sharing Faith, 215.

⁵⁶ Groome, Christian Religious Education, 191.

expressed or embodied."⁵⁷ Groome is comfortable with the ambiguity of his use of Christian Story.⁵⁸ He paints Christianity in the broadest possible strokes in order to highlight the multiple meanings of Christianity and protect it from being confused with doctrine or propositional theory.⁵⁹ He says, "to approach Christian Story/Vision as an archetypal "impersonal body of objective truths" would frustrate the dynamics of all the movements of shared praxis."⁶⁰ Therefore, he is satisfied that Christian Story is an adequate way to symbolize the breadth of the Christian tradition. He is aware that his use of Story to describe the Christian tradition must be distinguished from story as fiction, or story as purely subjective experience. Christian Story refers to God's historical revelation through a myriad of forms.⁶¹

Christian Story is not a complete description of Christianity for Groome. Christian Vision is also an integral part of it. Vision is the metaphor that indicates the

promises and responsibilities that arise from the Story for the lives of people who claim it as their own. . . . Vision is a metaphor of the whole eschatological aspect of Christian faith—that it is to be done, to be realized and to be brought about. It is synonymous, both immediately and ultimately, with the symbol "reign of God."⁶²

Vision does not only describe the ethical nature of Christianity, that is, what Christians do. It also lifts up the promises of God to the faithful to empower

⁵⁷ Groome, Christian Religious Education, 192.

⁵⁸ Groome, Sharing Faith, 216.

⁵⁹ Groome, Sharing Faith, 218.

⁶⁰ Groome, Sharing Faith, 219.

⁶¹ See Sharing Faith, 216, for a list of those forms.

⁶² Groome, Sharing Faith, 217.

them to do God's will. While Story indicates the past, Vision indicates the immediate present called forth by the promise of God's future reign.⁶³ Both Story and Vision are integral to the meaning of Christianity. Thus, Story and Vision are united for Groome as Story/Vision. Together Story/Vision recognizes the revelatory power of remembering the church's past and participation in the church's present informed by the future fulfillment of God's reign.

Movement 3 of shared praxis makes the Christian Story/Vision accessible to people so that they may "take on identity and agency" appropriate to the faith community of which they are a part. The rationale for movement 3 of shared praxis is to help persons do the hermeneutical work of appropriating the Christian Story/Vision into their lives and to facilitate the transformation of the Christian Story/Vision. This is in keeping with Groome's reconstructionist view of revelation. In order to do this work, participants must know something about the Christian Story/Vision. Groome leaves it to the educator to decide both "*what* to make accessible from the Story/Vision and *how* to make it accessible to participants."⁶⁴ He does give a number of hermeneutical hints on how to handle the texts of the tradition so that they are not mistaken to be authoritative beyond the human appropriation of them. By emphasizing hermeneutics, Groome hopes to avoid the problem of so concretizing Christian dogma that it become split off from people's lives.

In addition to explaining Christianity as Story/Vision and encouraging teaching hermeneutical skills for understanding its "texts," Groome suggests a number of methods as examples of ways through which the Story/Vision

⁶³ Groome, Sharing Faith, 217.

⁶⁴ Groome, Sharing Faith, 223.

can be communicated. They include: lectures, handouts, research projects, panel discussions, film media, story telling and field trips.⁶⁵ Groome sees such methods as useful for helping to introduce persons to the Story/Vision but he emphasizes hermeneutics in the section dedicated to movement 3, as it seems to be the *presentation* of the texts that is most important rather than the texts themselves. This underscores the praxis orientation of Groome's approach.

Summary of Shared Praxis

Inasmuch as Groome works out an effective approach for engaging learners with their own experience through critical reflection, in gaining skills of interpretation of texts, in critically appropriating the Christian Tradition and Vision, and in intentional decision and response for lived Christian faith, his approach is exceptionally helpful in overcoming the limitations of those educational approaches that for all practical purposes leave the learner out of the educational process. In shared praxis, the learner is seen as participant above all and the five movement process is aimed at engaging learners in participation, partnership and dialogue. Recognizing the need to appropriate the Christian message critically, through analyses of experience and society, educators engage learners in the educational process that is understood as a means of expressing in historic reality the reign of God. Groome's approach is very helpful in developing an educational process that engages learners in their own learning process. He includes the important dimensions of critical reflection in the process of making faith one's own, and he hermeneutics to help shape personal identity. He brings

⁶⁵ See Sharing Faith, 240, for the full list.

an engaging dynamic that opens up the educational process which is left wanting in Westerhoff's enculturation approach.

Limits of the Shared Praxis Approach

As pointed out in the introduction, a link exists between Christian identity and the theological resources that form that identity. What persons believe, what they think Christianity is, and how they "make sense out of their personal identity by means of Christian faith"⁶⁶ all influence the style and strength of Christian identity. Groome's shared praxis approach minimizes these concerns. He makes room for them in movement 3 where the Christian Story and Vision supposedly come to the fore and can be explained, but he does little to identify what that Christian Story and Vision is. He talks *about* the Story and the Vision rather than telling the Story or proclaiming the Vision. He offers a hermeneutic for working with "texts, " be they written or be they "living human documents," rather than explaining what Christianity is and what it brings to the human scene. In this way Groome emphasizes educational process to the near exclusion of what is to be taught, shared or learned. The limitation of Groome's approach in relation to my concern for education in Christian identity is that Groome collapses the "what" of the tradition into praxis. The result is that Groome seriously obscures the meaning of Christianity as faith in Christ. He is an activist and gives little heed to content.

While Groome does seem to be working off of some principles and concepts of Christian faith in the development of shared praxis, those he

⁶⁶ Stroup, Promise of Narrative Theology, 24.

chooses do not focus on the role of Christ in lived faith.⁶⁷ His approach assumes that people have adequate knowledge of this pivotal aspect of Christianity or that they can easily get it. In the current situation, many people are confused by the vocabulary, the controversies and alternative histories of Christianity and carry this confusion into the Christian educational experience. By making the assumption that people can move to hermeneutics first, without significant exposure to content and without having adequate opportunity to choose how one will relate to it, Groome's approach is limited. His suggestions for presenting the Christian Story/Vision in movement 3 offer few new ideas for communicating the content and meaning of Christianity. He rather offers some familiar methods for communicating content, like lectures, group discussions, panels and films, and he does not elaborate. The use of shared praxis for Christian religious education has the effect of obscuring the importance of the meaning of Christian faith and of giving little importance to the dynamic modes of communicating Christian faith.

What is needed is an approach which at once communicates the content or meaning of Christianity and engages persons in the kind of participation that Groome's approach supports so well. An educational approach that makes a clearer connection between Christian identity and the theological resources of

⁶⁷ This is not to say that Groome has no theological perspective. Groome seems to be working off of many of the principles and concepts that have been traditionally associated with American liberal religious education. His emphasis on the reign of God understood in terms of social context and social transformation (particularly as interpreted by "the historical Jesus"), a progressive approach to the role of human initiative in bringing about the reign of God, and education as a means of social reconstruction all illustrate his theological commitments.

Christianity may assist in attending to the current crisis of Christian identity in the church.

CHAPTER 3

Foundations for a Theology of Christian Education: Tillich's Theological Method

The challenge to educate for Christian identity pushes churches to wrestle with their own self understanding in light of the gospel and in light of the world. Unable to completely identify themselves with the dominant materialistic culture in which they participate, and yet hesitant to put themselves in a reactionary posture to it, many mainline churches remain ambivalent about who they are and what they believe. As was pointed out in chapter one, this lack of self-understanding is of crisis proportions. But, the crisis need not be the only or lasting word.

The crisis in Christian identity affords Christian educators a new opportunity to play a significant role in shaping the lives of persons and the communities of which they are a part. The challenge is to develop communities which educate persons to be authentic and articulate in their faith and also to grow in love, which is the mark of Christian community. The theological character of the crisis in Christian identity among the mainline denominations has already been described. If Christian education is to put renewed emphasis on the theological component of its work, then a continued rethinking of the foundations of Christian education theory is needed.

The loss of a clear theological tradition in the context of contemporary culture places a new burden on Christian educators. They must at once invite persons into relationship with God and the Christian community, and offer them a language which can introduce them with some clarity to Christian symbols and concepts with which they are unfamiliar and which are not echoed in the larger culture. This they must do while not shutting down the

role of doubt and free exploration on the part of persons and not forcing the Christian message into simplistic or literalistic propositions which are neither adequate truth claims or faithful to the spirit of the message of Christianity. This creates a complexity in the task of education which not is easily handled. This situation calls Christian educators to be more explicit and apologetic in their work of educating theologically without sacrificing the integrity of their work.

With this in mind, three basic questions must become central to the work of Christian educators: What is the message of Christianity? Why is it important? And, how can these aspects of Christianity be effectively communicated? For the purposes of Christian education, no one of these questions can be effectively approached without some thought given to the other two. And yet, some approaches tend to neglect one of these questions. I have tried to show this in the analysis presented in the previous chapter. There I pointed out that when the question of why the Christian message is meaningful goes unengaged, as tends to happen in the enculturationist approach, then the motivation for growing in one's knowledge of Christianity naturally diminishes or becomes parochial. When the question of Christian definition is left unattended in favor of educational process, as in the shared-praxis approach, then the particular contribution of Christianity goes unrecognized; it is replaced with other concerns and, by default, those groups that offer clear definition to the meaning of Christianity set the agenda for Christian education.

An educational approach that recognizes the theological resources of Christianity in a way that effectively engages persons with the lived meaning of Christianity may offer a way of opening up the relationship between the Christian community and its cultural context as helpful for education for

Christian identity. In this way the ghettoizing tendencies of Christian enculturation and the obscuring tendencies of shared-praxis may be overcome.

Paul Tillich was a twentieth-century Protestant theologian who articulated a theological method that offers Christian education a structure for effectively communicating the Christian message. Tillich's method of correlation keeps the questions of what Christianity is, and why it is important at the forefront of communicating the meaning of Christianity in ways that overcome the limitations of the enculturation and shared-praxis approaches. This chapter will review Tillich's method of correlation as an important foundation for Christian education.

Tillich's Method of Correlation

Tillich developed his method of correlation in relation to the role of theology in the church. Tillich saw that theology deals primarily with "the meaning of being for us."¹ It has a "soteriological character"² whose object has to do with that which concerns persons "ultimately."³ Tillich distinguished between religion in the narrow sense, typically associated with organized religion and personal piety, and religion in the broad sense which he defined as being ultimately concerned. Ultimate concern is the depth dimension of human existence. Tillich related it to "what is known in religion as the Great Commandment, to love God with all one's heart,

¹ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1:22.

² Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:24.

³ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:10.

strength and power."⁴ Religion as a cultural phenomenon is important as it has a special function in tapping the depth dimension of existence. But, it is not to be confused with the depth dimension itself which is germane not only to a part of one's cultural life, but to human existence as such. The depth dimension cuts through all dimensions of life and cannot be separated out from life. To cut religion off from this depth dimension is to render it powerless for transforming the whole of life.

Tillich was committed to the idea that the function of theology in the church is to assist the church to understand and express "the truth of the Christian message" in its relationship to human meaning. Affirming this apologetic function and tradition of theology, Tillich wanted a theological method that emphasized the meaning of being in ways that would engage persons with it. Tillich's method of correlation is such a method. It communicates the Christian message through putting it in dialogue with the human situation.

Tillich recognized that the meaning of Christianity has a relationship to the predicament of being human. The method of correlation integrates this relationship into its very structure. This structure takes the form of a correlation between question and answer. That is, Tillich's correlational method poses Christianity as the answer to the question of the human predicament and seeks to develop a relationship between the two through a question and answer structure. Tillich pictured this questioning and answering method as a movement between poles. This offers an image which emphasizes the independence and interdependence of the question

⁴ Paul Tillich, "Art and Society," in On Art and Architecture, ed. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 32.

and the answer.⁵ The relationship between the questions and the answers can be seen as the poles are juxtaposed, indicating their common relationship and their uniqueness as question and as answer. The questioning pole of theology has to do with the why of Christianity. The answering pole of theology has to do with the what of Christianity. In this polar relationship the answer of Christianity is the answer to the question raised by being human.

The two poles must be related to each other if the message is to have any meaning for the situation, and if the situation is to enable expression of the message. This simply means that in order to communicate the meaning of the Christian message as the answer to the question of being human, the answer must be engaged with the situation for which it is the answer. This structure then emphasizes the importance of what the Christian message is and why it is important. What Christianity is (as answer), and why it is important (the question of being human) are made relevant to each other through the polar (questioning-answering) structure or the correlational method.

In order to understand more clearly the questioning-answering structure of the method of correlation, Tillich transposed questioning-answering language into terms which can be used to analyze the concerns of human meaning. That is, Tillich describes the answer of Christianity as the "message" of Christianity. He calls the question of human existence the "situation." In this way Tillich correlates human existence(?) with divine manifestation(!). The message of Christianity offers the answer of divine manifestation to the question of human estrangement which is implied in

⁵ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 2:13-16.

the human situation. This correlational structure recognizes that the message of Christianity is meaningful to the human situation only in so far as the message is related to the question implied in the human situation. Since the human situation is the medium through which the question of existence is expressed, the human situation must be explored as fundamental to expressing the meaning of the Christian message. For Tillich, the situation recognized in the correlational method is the existential situation to which Christianity speaks. The existential situation shapes human language and human self understanding and is the only medium humanity has through which the message of Christianity may be understood.

Tillich's method of correlation assumes the correlation between question and answer as the basic structure for communicating Christianity meaningfully. Why the Christian message is important as answer is explained by analyzing the meaning of the Christian message in terms of the situation to which it speaks. In this way Tillich says, "theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received."⁶ These theological concepts which are so important to Christian identity are included and related to each other through the structure of the method of correlation itself.

Both question and answer must be represented in the process of Christian communication. When the situation to which Christianity speaks is adequately recognized, then the answer of Christianity takes on the depth of its meaning. In Tillich's words, the message "answers the questions implied in the situation in the power of the eternal message and with the means

⁶ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:3.

provided by the situation whose questions it answer."⁷ When the answer of Christianity is adequately presented, it is done as answer to the question of human existence.

A Critique of Enculturation and Shared Praxis Based on Tillich's Correlational Method

Identifying the correlational method with the importance it has in fulfilling the apologetic need of the church and the apologetic task of theology, Tillich pointed out the limits or errors of non-correlational methods for fulfilling such a role. He was critical of those theologies which tend too strongly toward one pole or the other. In the tendency to favor one pole over the other, something important to the communication process is lost. The dynamic relationship between the meaning of the answer and the situation to which it speaks breaks down. The result is a disintegrating approach to communication and in regards to this discussion, the result is a dis-integrating approach to Christian education.

The Critique of Enculturation

Tillich pointed out that those theological approaches which lean to the side of the answer quickly become irrelevant. Since they do not take into consideration the "situation" or question of existence, such approaches isolate the message from the situation to which it speaks. Methodologically they insulate the message from the context that calls forth the meaning of the answer in the first place. In Tillich's own day, the dialectical or kerygmatic theologians fell into this error. Seeing a radical break, an abyss, between God and creation, they emphasized proclamation as the only way to create a relationship between humanity and God. In speaking of this type of theology

⁷ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:6.

which tends to focus on the Christian message and sever it from the situation by seeking "exclusive transcendence"⁸ of the situation, Tillich says it is "inclined to deny any common ground with those outside the theological circle."⁹ Seeing no connection between cultural and religious existence, communication of the message is meaningful only to those already within the theological circle. To those outside the circle, the message "must be thrown at those in the situation-thrown like a stone."¹⁰

This is the problem of the present day enculturation approach to Christian education. At best it speaks only to those already in the community. It "nurtures" persons into the answer as it is expressed in various ways through the Christian community, but does not recognize the question that makes the answer meaningful. Tillich pointed out the difficulty that religious induction (enculturation) faces when attempting to communicate meaningfully the answers of Christianity. He challenges the religious enculturation approach to come to terms with

the fact that it has to give answers to questions which never have been asked. . . . Therefore, every religious educator must try to find the existentially important questions which are alive in the minds and hearts of the pupils. It must make the pupil aware of the questions which he already has.¹¹

Some common ground must be established by which the words of the Christian message can take on meaning. This is true not only for education with children, but also and possibly more especially true for youth and adults

⁸ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:7.

⁹ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:6.

¹⁰ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:7.

¹¹ Paul Tillich, "A Theology of Education," in Theology of Culture, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 154.

who, due to abstract reasoning skills and to their longer life experience, have much experience with the challenges to life presented by the situation. To engage personal experience and the existential questions that come from it, creates interest in finding resolution and answers. In this way the Christian answers to the questions of existence become relevant to each other.

While enculturation offers the Christian message through participation in the Christian community and the meanings it carries, it does not adequately reveal much of the situation that it seeks to heal. While the answers it offers, particularly expressed in the answer of communal belonging, indeed may bring a certain level of healing and wholeness to persons, when a strictly enculturation approach is adopted, the church becomes ghettoized from the deeper meaning of the Christian message by insulating itself from the situation to which Christianity is the answer. The enculturation approach offers no bridge between the situation and the message. The only way of expressing the Christian message to the "outside world" is through the witness of the "counter-culture" it represents. Such confrontation does little to win persons to the Christian community and it does little to help Christians understand their own situation as having common ground with the situation of others. Without a mediating approach, the Christian message and the Christian community may become unintelligible, and potentially meaningless to the larger world.

Critical of education by means of induction (enculturation), Tillich advocated education which makes room for people to raise the "radical question of truth." This radical questioning serves to engage the answers of Christianity in their relevance for the situation. While Tillich may have been too harsh in his criticism of enculturation, ignoring the need for imitation and formation as a means of understanding the answer, he is right

to critique such approaches on these methodological grounds. If room is not made to see the answer in relation with the question, then ultimately the answer is vacuous of "the meaning of being." Induction, or enculturating education, must include a humanist element if it is to help the learner to be open to the transforming power of God's answer for personal and social life. Without cultivating the questions to which Christianity offers answers, the answers are meaningless, and degenerate into bits of disconnected information to be "thrown like a stone."¹²

The Critique of Shared Praxis

Tillich pointed out the limits of the other end of the theological spectrum from the kerygmatic theologians; those of the liberal progressives. Tillich critiqued those approaches which overemphasized the power of humanity to create its own meaning without God. These approaches lean toward the pole identified as the situation. Tillich had in mind those of his day who denied the transcendent answers of theology. He said they tend to "lose themselves in the relativities of the situation," and, thereby, become the situation itself.¹³ Without the answer implied by the question, theology loses its message and loses the power to contribute to the situation in any positive way. Tillich sees this is the problem of "the religious progressivism of the so-called humanists in America."¹⁴ They look to humanity itself with an inordinate optimism

¹² This is not to say that offering of the answers through education in the symbol system of Christianity is inappropriate until the questions have been adequately raised. The symbols themselves will raise certain questions if education is done well. While there is a certain discretion between the questions and the answers, in the correlation approach they are to be seen as intimate in relationship.

¹³ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:5.

¹⁴ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:5.

regarding its ability to create answers to the problems of the situation. They believe that by working together, persons can make the world a better place. Tillich saw this as an inaccurate reading of the answer. For him, the answer must transcend the situation. It must come from beyond the situation in order to speak to and transform it.

This critique can be applied to Groome's shared-praxis approach. As pointed out in chapter two, shared-praxis emphasizes the dynamics of revealing the situation, particularly as represented by the problems of hermeneutics and the resolution of these problems by participation in the situation so as to transform it. It gives priority to group hermeneutical processes rather than to the search for answers. It stresses the critical element in education, with which Tillich would agree, but it does so without engaging the Christian message in a significant way. In overemphasizing the importance of personal authority (as opposed to non-critical acceptance of the status quo) as an important dimension of education, shared-praxis collapses the answer into the process of dealing with the problem. The limitation of this for Christian education is that the unique contribution of the Christian message is not emphasized and is therefore easily lost. While the importance of this contribution to assisting persons toward "owned faith" is recognized and appreciated here, it is not the only important factor in education for Christian faith. The Christian message, as content, plays an important role as well.

Groome's effort to make the Christian message explicit through movement 3 is too weak to counterbalance the emphasis on liberating hermeneutics. Both the question and the answer are needed to create a meaningful way of understanding the situation in light of the message.

While it seems that Groome wants to incorporate the Christian answer into his approach,¹⁵ he tends to identify the Christian answer with the Christian Tradition, thus de-emphasizing the historic Christian concern for a direct relationship with the power of God revealed in the gospel.

While critical questioning is very important to the method of correlation, so also is the answering pole of the correlation. Shared-praxis is especially helpful for examining the questions of the human predicament. It offers little by way of making the contributions of Christianity to redeem humanity explicit or engaging.

Summary

The apologetic approach expressed in Tillich's method of correlation offers a way to emphasize the answers as well as the questions, and to keep them in dynamic relationship with each other. The correlational method, then, is helpful for Christian education in that it teaches the content or meaning of Christianity by keeping it in dynamic relationship with the situation to which it speaks and through which it must be communicated if it is to be existentially grasped. Those who employ this method recognize that existence is a question mark seeking resolution, and they encourage persons to recognize this. The correlational method is also helpful because it recognizes the answers that Christianity offers. Indeed, without emphasis upon the answer, theology loses itself in the relativities of the situation. In Tillich's correlational method, the type of question raised assumes the possibility of an answer. While there may be differing perspectives on just

¹⁵ See Sharing Faith, 221. Here Groome says: "Educators need to weave together symbolically rich expressions of the Christian tradition and make them accessible in ways likely to engage people in personal encounters with Story/Vision rather than simply proposing, as 'critical scholarship' tends to do, a technical and 'objective' analysis of its 'texts.'"

what the "answer" is, the point to be made here is that Christianity offers meaning and power because of the answers it offers in response to the questions implied in the personal and social situation. There is a content which gives Christianity its meaning and staying power over time. Without it the contribution of Christianity becomes lost. The message and the situation must remain in dynamic relation with each other if theology and Christian education are to attend successfully to their common task of serving the church to fulfill its calling.

Tillich and the Situation

If we see Christian education as an enterprise whose task is to communicate Christian meaning in ways that take seriously the relationship between the questions and the answers, the question Christian education must ask is what is the best way to open up that relationship in persons? We have seen how it is that the enculturation approach errs toward ghettoization because it does not engage adequately the "why" questions of the human predicament or the cultural situation which challenges the church to make the Christian message intelligible to it. Christian education must include an analysis of what the situation is that gives rise to the questions which lead to the answers that Christianity gives. Tillich offers a strategy for opening learners up to the questions of existence and the answers which Christianity gives through his emphasis on helping people to "see" the existential situation in which they find themselves. In order to understand Tillich's view of the situation as a significant component in utilizing the method of correlation, we do well to look at his view of the human predicament.

Human Being and the Threat of Non-Being

In examining the nature of human beings Tillich focused on the relationship between being and non-being as constitutive of human selfhood.

In his book The Courage to Be Tillich examined the nature of being and non-being and their relationship to the experiences of anxiety and courage.¹⁶ Human existence is a composite of being in its relationship to the constant threat of non-being. Being expresses self-affirmation while non-being works against such self-affirmation in self-destruction. In this way "non-being" is dependent upon "being" for its power. Without being, non-being has no meaning. Being as the power of self-affirmation then, has the stronger foothold in human nature. And yet, by virtue of death, the most fundamental expression of non-being, being is always under the threat of non-being. This situation gives human being its quality of finite existence. The boundaries non-being places on human existence gives being its finitude. "Being has non-being within itself."¹⁷ This predicament can be summarized as the human capacity for estrangement with oneself.

Courage is facing the threat of non-being, accepting it as a part of the human condition, and expressing self affirmation "in-spite-of" the threat of non-being.¹⁸ Human beings cannot do away with the threat of non-being. It constitutes human being. But, they can overcome it through expressing the power of self-affirmation, creatively expressed in "the courage to be."

Tillich names three types of anxiety as characterizing the felt threat to non-being in human nature: ontic, spiritual and moral anxiety. They include threats of fate and death, emptiness and meaninglessness and guilt and condemnation, respectively. Ontic anxiety is the most fundamental type of

¹⁶ Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 32.

¹⁷ Tillich, Courage to Be, 34.

¹⁸ Tillich, Courage to Be, 32.

anxiety. Tillich describes the anxiety of meaninglessness (and emptiness) as the spiritual expression of ontic anxiety. It is the threat of death to the human spirit. The anxiety of condemnation (and guilt) is the threat of death expressed in moral terms. It expresses the threat of death through the failure to fulfill human destiny. Let us look more closely at these three types of anxiety.

The Anxieties of Fate and Death, Emptiness and Meaninglessness,
and Guilt and Condemnation

Tillich sees the anxieties of fate and death, emptiness and meaninglessness, and guilt and condemnation as three expressions of the basic anxiety which expresses the felt threat of non-being. The anxiety of physical death expresses the "contingency of our temporal being."¹⁹ It "overshadows all concrete anxieties and gives them their ultimate seriousness."²⁰ It is that "permanent horizon"²¹ from which human beings experience living. Tillich points out that the increase of individualization in relation to society increases the anxiety of death.²² The lone person sees "the horizon" with an unobstructed view. The feeling of aloneness and the lack of protection against death is acute.

The threat of death is the most fundamental threat of non-being. The contingency of being brings the anxiety of fate into the foreground as a relative threat of non-being. The anxiety of fate "produces anxiety even where

¹⁹ Tillich, Courage to Be, 44.

²⁰ Tillich, Courage to Be, 43.

²¹ Tillich, Courage to Be, 43.

²² Tillich, Courage to Be, 42.

an immediate threat of death is absent."²³ As human beings become aware of their lack of ultimate necessity, they experience the anxiety of fate as well as death. Fate limits self-affirmation by instilling a sense of hopelessness about the possibilities for vitality. Fate robs persons of their power to grow and to change themselves and their world.

The spiritual threat of non-being is expressed in the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness. It is the threat to the spiritual self-affirmation of being. Tillich describes the spiritual self-affirmation of being as living creatively. It is the creative action of "living spontaneously in action and reaction, with the contents of one's cultural life."²⁴ That is, the spiritual life is the meaningful life, however that meaning is made. Such meaning making expresses both "participation in the spiritual life and loving its contents." For example, "The scientist loves both the truth he discovers and himself insofar as he discovers it. He is held by the content of his discovery."²⁵

The loss of concern and the deeper loss of ultimate concern in creative living are expressed in feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness. These are the threats against spiritual self-affirmation. Tillich points out that this spiritual threat is implied in human finitude and actualized by human estrangement.²⁶ Spiritual anxiety is characterized by doubt. Doubt, then, is part of life and in Tillich's view has a positive role to play in growth. As long as doubt is an element of creative living, it is not a threat to being. If doubt

²³ Tillich, Courage to Be, 45.

²⁴ Tillich, Courage to Be, 46.

²⁵ Tillich, Courage to Be, 46.

²⁶ Tillich, Courage to Be, 48.

swallows up the awareness of confidence altogether, then doubt loses its power as a method of growth and becomes existential despair.²⁷

Tillich identified the anxiety of meaninglessness as the anxiety of our age, dominated by "the development of liberalism and democracy" and "the rise of technical civilization."²⁸ Writing in the period which spanned World War I and II, Tillich was especially sensitive to the devastating effects of "advances" in technological and biological warfare, the cultural influence of mass society, and the loss of the power of religious symbols. These are examples of the spiritual expression of the anxiety of death. He defines the anxiety of meaninglessness as

anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings. This anxiety is aroused by the loss of a spiritual center, of an answer, however symbolic and indirect, to the question of the meaning of existence.²⁹

In technological and industrial society, mechanization becomes the predominant metaphor for meaning. Cut off from creative, living relationships that constitute being, anxiety about who one is and what life means become the prominent problems. Tillich briefly outlines the journeys of persons who struggle with this type of despair. With the spiritual center lost, or thought to be lost, persons hold on to whatever they can to hold up their lives.

Tillich names tradition, autonomous conviction and emotional preference as ways people try to avoid the doubt presented by the anxiety of meaninglessness. When these are not enough, some flee from isolation into

²⁷ Tillich, Courage to Be, 48.

²⁸ Tillich, Courage to Be, 61.

²⁹ Tillich, Courage to Be, 47.

a participation whereby the threat of anxiety disappears. But, such escape damages the integrity of self-affirmation.³⁰ Fanaticism is a similar kind of escape from the anxiety of meaninglessness. These responses to contemporary experience are evident enough. It can be seen in those who seek to escape the social situation by creating their own little world, and by those who in desperation lose all caution for their own self-affirmation by turning the threat outward into the disruption and terrorization of society.

The third type of anxiety is the threat against human beings' moral self-affirmation: the anxiety of guilt and condemnation. This type of anxiety recognizes the responsibility of human beings to choose their response to life and to death. Human beings are responsible to fulfill their destiny as an expression of finite freedom. That is, humans have the freedom to determine themselves "through decisions in the center of [their] being."³¹ This echoes similar themes found in psychoanalytic and existentialist psychology and philosophy of the period in which Tillich wrote. The rise of technology and authoritarian political regimes worked to break down the power of persons to claim their humanity. Psychoanalysis and existentialism both took seriously the power of persons to find meaning in the midst of cultural chaos and repression.³²

³⁰ Tillich, Courage to Be, 49.

³¹ Tillich, Courage to Be, 52.

³² Victor Frankl, a contemporary of Tillich, developed an existentialist approach for psychology in his book Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy/ A Newly Revised and Enlarged Edition of From Death-camp to Existentialism, trans. Illse Lasch (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962). Logotherapy, which Frankl developed through his prison camp experiences, is an excellent example of how meaning is found in spite of the oppression of the worst of twentieth century "no exit" situations, the Nazi prison and death camps. It is no surprise that the emphasis on the ability and

With the capacity for fulfilling the demand of moral being (destiny) comes also the capacity of failing it, that is of losing one's destiny of finite freedom. Tillich summarizes: "non-being is mixed with being in his moral self-affirmation as it is in his spiritual and ontic self-affirmation."³³ The ambiguity presented by this situation expresses itself in guilt and condemnation. Unable to be perfect, but having a glimmer of what that might be, humans experience guilt and in the more radical failures of moral self-affirmation, experience condemnation.

The reaction against the threats of guilt and condemnation inherent in moral existence is to try to do away with the threat through either anomism or legalism.³⁴ Neither of these defenses against guilt and condemnation can "cure" the anxiety and both have a way of breaking down, thus opening the way for the power of guilt and condemnation as moral despair to be experienced.

The predominance of the anxiety of meaninglessness in our mechanized age does not eliminate the expression of the threats of death and condemnation. The threat of death as still expressed in the destruction of the world by nuclear (and non-nuclear) means still expresses the fear that we may simply all come to an end. The anxiety of extinction that arises at the threat of nuclear holocaust or through the slow death of humanity and all living things through environmental destruction, is ever present in our current situation. We court death through giving life to technological creations. The loss of destiny, indicated by the proliferation of doing evil under the guise of

responsibility of the individual to fulfill destiny through moral choice came in a period filled with the determinism of rational technology run amuck.

³³ Tillich, Courage to Be, 52.

³⁴ Tillich, Courage to Be, 53.

good, turns persons in upon themselves in yet another kind of despair: the despair of lost destiny. This is also despair over the threat of non-being.

All three types of anxiety are interrelated not only in their origin of the relationship between being and non-being, but also because there is some experience of all three threats in any single one of them. Tillich explains that the ontic threat of death, the spiritual threat of meaninglessness and the moral threat of condemnation are

interwoven in such a way that one of them gives the predominant color but all of them participate in the coloring of the state of anxiety. All of them and their underlying unity are existential, i.e. they are implied in the existence of man as man, his finitude, and his estrangement.³⁵

As an example of this, Tillich refers to Paul's words describing "sin as the sting of death" as the cohering of the anxieties of guilt and death. He also recognizes that in their "relative" forms the different types of anxiety can help each other out. Tillich offers this example:

If the spiritual contents have lost their power [i.e. emptiness] the self-affirmation of the moral personality is a way in which meaning can be rediscovered. The simple call to duty can save from emptiness, while the disintegration of the moral consciousness is an almost irresistible basis for the attack of spiritual nonbeing.³⁶

Courage characterizes the quality necessary to face anxiety. It helps people to live with anxiety and by living with it, overcome it. Tillich points out that often times persons and civilizations can find their courage through participation the cultural structures of meaning, order and belief. Such structures work to protect individually and collectively from the pressure of the threat of non-being. But, he also points out that when these structures

³⁵ Tillich, Courage to Be, 54.

³⁶ Tillich, Courage to Be, 54.

begin to disintegrate the threat of non-being grows. "Conflicts between the old, which tries to maintain itself, often with new means, and the new, which deprives the old of its intrinsic power, produce anxiety in all directions."³⁷ This is the current situation of society. Tillich explains that in the situation the threat of non-being is well expressed in "two types of nightmare": the impossibility of escape, the feeling of being trapped, and the other annihilating openness of space with no footing, the falling into the void.³⁸ In these nightmares, all three types of self affirmation, ontic, spiritual and moral are at risk.

Examining the Cultural Situation as a Means of Revealing the Types of Anxiety

If theology and Christian education are to keep the questions of existence and answers of Christianity in kindred relationship in ways that open up the communication of the answers to persons, then inclusion of the situation, described ontologically by anxiety, must be facilitated. Tillich knew that any honest answers must be made in terms of facing the questions authentically. Cultivating the questions, or the situation, then takes on a key role in the communication process. Tillich believed that, by looking at the expression of anxiety in the culture, we can get a better view of the reality we face, and also get a better sense of what in Christianity speaks to (answers) this situation. The importance of coming to terms with the situation by recognizing it cannot be underestimated. Tillich saw this as part of the Protestant Reformation legacy: honestly facing the human predicament is a prerequisite to finding the authentic answer. In reference to art, Tillich said: "This is the

³⁷ Tillich, Courage to Be, 62.

³⁸ Tillich, Courage to Be, 62-63.

Protestant element in the present situation: No premature solutions should be tried; rather, the human situation in its conflicts should be expressed courageously."³⁹ Honest presentation of the situation, even in its most despairing portrayal, expresses a transcending of the situation.

If it is expressed, it is already transcended: He who can bear and express guilt shows that he already knows about "acceptance-in-spite-of." He who can bear and express meaninglessness shows that he experiences meaning within his desert of meaninglessness.⁴⁰

Tillich attended to the expression of the situation in a variety of ways that can lead us in developing ways of cultivating the expression of the situation such that the answers may be understood. He wrote about culture (economics, the arts, science and technology, medicine and particularly psychiatry, education and the ministry) as ways of revealing the situation we are in and how it is related to Christian concepts. These cultural expressions of the human situation show its constructive and destructive capacities. When looked at from the view of doing theology or communicating Christian meaning, an analysis of culture holds a key role in the process.

Tillich's cultural analysis took seriously the symbolic expression of the anxiety of estrangement in the mass culture of technological society. By identifying patterns of estrangement in social organization, mass communication, and artistic expressions, Tillich was able to show how the human predicament of finitude, anxiety and estrangement is expressed in the cultural situation. While Tillich's cultural analysis is directly related to the period in which he lived, his approach to cultural analysis is relevant to the

³⁹ Paul Tillich, "Protestantism and Artistic Style," in Art and Architecture, ed. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 124.

⁴⁰ Tillich, "Protestantism and Artistic Style," 124.

present day. We are still in a period of high technology and of shifting political and cultural boundaries in society. The rising urbanization of society and the influence of information and communication technologies, have much in common with the post World War II era. While everyday fear and violence have become a standard experience of more people than in Tillich's period, thereby heightening the feelings of anxiety, the existential situation remains the same. A look at both the content and style of Tillich's cultural analysis will be helpful for our purposes here.

Symbols of Estrangement in Social Organization of Technological Society

Estrangement takes a number of forms in technological society. Three forms of estrangement that Tillich discusses are thingification, the overwhelming feeling of uncanniness and patternization. They are exemplary of the kind of estrangement technological society promotes. We do well to be able to recognize them as characteristic of the situation which Christian education must include in fulfilling its task.

Thingification refers to understanding and treating people as objects rather than as subjects. In its attraction to technological tools for the advancement of humanity, human beings have become lost in their own production.⁴¹ Technology has the predominant metaphor to describe existence. People become things to be used as tools for whatever ends seem important. In the personal realm, thingification happens when the unity of being is forgone in the "analysis of the elements that constitute him and of their interrelationship [which] reduce the self to a process of elements without

⁴¹ Paul Tillich, "Thing and Self," in The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society, ed. J. Mark Thomas (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), 112.

center."⁴² In the social realm, thingification can be seen in slavery, in "the free market where the threat of hunger can bring man into a situation of being a mere object", and in "collectivistic systems where the central authorities try . . . to transform men into processes that are dependent on directions from outside and that have lost their independent selves." ⁴³ In the fascination with the power engendered over others through the help of tools, humans become things, and lose their creative selfhood. Estrangement becomes the dominant way of being.

Tillich points out the protests against dehumanization in the philosophy of existentialism and in the rise of depth psychology which arose alongside the proliferation of technology. In existentialism, persons are encouraged to do whatever they must to save their subjectivity. The choice and the leap characterize the protest against thingification.⁴⁴ Depth psychology, attempts to retrieve repressed subjectivity and the power of the self which has become alienated from conscious living. Tillich concludes that these efforts to overcome thingification are "more an expression of despair than an answer." Indeed most of modern living, even in its efforts at healing and humanization, say as much about "the situation" as it does about the answer.

⁴² Tillich, "Thing and Self," 118.

⁴³ Tillich, "Thing and Self," 118-19.

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, "The Person in a Technical Society," in The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society, ed. J. Mark Thomas (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press, 1988), 129.

Another category of Tillich's cultural analysis of the anxiety of estrangement is "the feeling of uncanniness."⁴⁵ By uncanniness Tillich refers to the intangibles which human beings feel opposing them. He says:

Uncanny, i.e., not homelike, not familiar, foreign and threatening is our situation in the world as such, even if there are not particular threats and feelings of uncanniness present. Indeed, exactly then, for if we are threatened by something specific, we defend ourselves, and the act of self-defense already takes a part of its uncanniness away from the thing. When, however, we cannot defend ourselves because nothing is there that tangibly opposes us, that is where uncanniness is in power.⁴⁶

Tillich uses the example of architectural dwelling places as the human symbolic expression of the fight with uncanniness as the expression of estrangement. In the uncanniness of infinite space people build walls to bound the infinite space (void) that would swallow one up. In the uncanniness of totally bounded space like a cave, "the experience of constriction (with which anxiety is connected), is partially overcome in the union with infinite space by means of the window, the balcony, the tower, the courtyard, the garden."⁴⁷ Even as the house expresses the human conflict with uncanniness, so also the city expresses the same thing on a larger scale. The ordering of life, whether architecturally or more broadly through the control possible through technology, expresses the category of uncanniness as an expression of modern estrangement. The problem of uncanniness includes space exploration beyond the bounds of earth and the attitude of

⁴⁵ Paul Tillich, "The Technical City as Symbol" in The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society, ed. J. Mark Thomas (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), 180.

⁴⁶ Tillich, "Technical City," 180.

⁴⁷ Tillich, "Technical City," 180.

conquering space through breaking through the earth's atmosphere into dominating space as well as earth.

Patternization is yet another form of estrangement expressed in culture. Patternization describes the conformity human beings pursue as a means of helping them to survive in the culture. It describes "the process in which persons are modeled according to a definite pattern."⁴⁸ Patternization offers the security of being closer to other objects who have lost their subjectivity as a means of overcoming anxiety. Tillich identifies three main causes of patternization in contemporary culture. They are: "technical civilization as such; the intentional imposition of patterns on the masses by interested groups; and the striving for security in many people especially the youngest generation."⁴⁹ The most powerful tools of patternization are expressed in business economics, in advertising and simply in the concept of mass culture.⁵⁰ These tools view and reduce people to objects through manipulation of native desires. Business does it by standardizing the qualities and skills needed to participate. Advertising does it by "creating needs" for products that will be profitable. The influence of the concept of mass culture does it by desiring mass distribution which cannot avoid "the stereotype, standardization and the lowest common denominator."⁵¹ Tillich describes the situation:

⁴⁸ Tillich, "Conformity," in The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society, ed. J. Mark Thomas (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988), 145.

⁴⁹ Tillich, "Conformity," 146.

⁵⁰ Tillich, "Conformity," 147.

⁵¹ Tillich, "Conformity," 148.

Once can hardly avoid the impression that the means of mass communication through which these cultural commodities are distributed to everybody have the effect that children receive much too early the status of adults, while adults remain children, never allowed to grow into maturity. Maturity, personal as well as cultural, presupposes a suffering under problems, a necessity to decide, a possibility of saying no.⁵²

Religion has not been immune to the influence of mass culture, marketing itself likewise and losing its significance as "the place where the ultimate source and power of nonconformism becomes manifest, the place where the prophetic no to all patterns, religious as well as nonreligious, is heard and proclaimed."⁵³ Tillich points out that the very fact that there remain voices that counter such conformity, those of rebellion, of the expose, and even of boredom, shows the potential humanizing effects of courage and decision.⁵⁴ Patternized conformity, uncanniness and thingification characterize the spiritual situation of technological society. The loss of the depth dimension, (the relationship with ultimate concern as a humanizing, spiritual characteristic) in the culture signifies the situation to which Christianity must relate if its answers are to be adequate and honestly meaningful for humanity. By paying attention to what is going on in the culture, particularly in its politics and in its mode of economic development, the questions of existence can be asked, which is significant in being open to the answers.

Symbols of Estrangement in the Art of Technological Society

Tillich appreciated the arts, particularly the visual arts (including architecture) as a means of revealing the cultural situation of the threat of

⁵² Tillich, "Conformity," 148.

⁵³ Tillich, "Conformity," 148.

⁵⁴ Tillich, "Conformity," 149.

non-being, thereby indicating at least a portion of what Christianity must attend to if it is to be made meaningful to the contemporary age.⁵⁵ Art is helpful at revealing the shape of the anxiety of meaninglessness by virtue of its expression, particularly in its use of symbol. Tillich says: "Science is of greater importance in the rise of a spiritual situation but art is more important for its apprehension."⁵⁶

Art in is more than "painting a picture" of the situation. It is the interpretation of the situation in its depth dimension which includes the surface, but involves much more. Defining religion as that dimension in the personality which is related to "ultimate concern," Tillich helped to articulate how art, regardless of whether it is overtly "religious" art, may carry in it a revelation of the depth dimension of being.⁵⁷ The depth dimension is communicated through style. Style is what expresses the "encounter with reality."⁵⁸ It is a term which describes how reality is encountered in culture as a whole. Tillich emphasized,

Style is that element of a work of art which qualifies its particular form by a more universal form principle-is present in the style of whole

⁵⁵ Tillich also saw art as a way of revealing the authentic expression of ultimate concern.

⁵⁶ Paul Tillich, "Excerpt from The Religious Situation," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 67.

⁵⁷ Paul Tillich, "Religious Dimensions in Contemporary Art," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 172.

⁵⁸ Tillich, "Religious Dimensions in Contemporary Art," 173.

periods, of continents and countries, of artistic schools, of the development of individual artists."⁵⁹

In paying attention to artistic style as well as style in other arenas "one can discover the ultimate concern of a society."⁶⁰ That is, style has a "revelatory character."⁶¹ Style is revelatory because it expresses the depth dimension.

What makes style religious? What about style makes it an expression of the depth dimension? Tillich answers that "it puts the religious question radically, and has the power, the courage, to face the situation out of which this question comes, namely the human predicament."⁶² Style is intimately related to symbol. Symbols represent and participate in the reality to which they point. "They are born out of a special encounter with reality. They die, if the original situation vanishes."⁶³ When style itself is symbolic of the reality it is representing, then it has the power to reveal the depth dimension, the dimension that cannot be seen. This being the case, if art is to be revelatory, if we are to encounter reality through it, much attention needs to be paid to the symbolism it uses and how this is expressed in style. In this way, the

⁵⁹ Paul Tillich, "Visual Arts and the Revelatory Character of Style," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 128.

⁶⁰ Paul Tillich, "Art and Society," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 28.

⁶¹ Tillich, "Visual Arts and the Revelatory Character of Style," 128.

⁶² Paul Tillich, "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 97.

⁶³ Tillich, "Visual Arts and the Revelatory Character of Style," 133.

viewer may come to more clearly understand what is or was going on in a given cultural period.

Tillich saw that Protestantism has a "pathos for the profane. It loves to go before the gates of the sanctuary (pro fanis) and find the divine there."⁶⁴ This is possible in Tillich's view because "what concerns us unconditionally is never missing in any reality."⁶⁵ When it came to the visual arts Tillich sought to express this commitment by developing four categories of art which recognize the relationship between religion and art: art that is non-religious in style and non-religious in content; art that is religious in style and non-religious in content; art that is non-religious in style and religious in content; art that is religious in style and religious in content.⁶⁶ Such categorizations help to emphasize the importance of the depth dimension communicate in both style and symbol (content) and distinguish it from art that which does not communicate the depth dimension. This is particularly important when attempting to use art as a means of educating persons about and inviting them into encounter the situation. The ability to distinguish in an artistic expression between that which reveals reality and that which covers it up is of great importance. For example, if a painting is religious in content, but not in style, then its religiousness covers up the religious dimension and the religious situation that reveals it. In this way Tillich developed a scheme by

⁶⁴ Paul Tillich, "On the Theology of Fine Art and Architecture," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 210.

⁶⁵ Tillich, "On the Theology of Fine Art and Architecture," 211.

⁶⁶ Tillich, "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," 93-99.

which to utilize Protestantism's historic appreciation for the role of honesty in religious experience.⁶⁷

Art reveals the situation through the participation of the artist and also through the participation of the viewer. The artist participates in the depth dimension through the creative process when it surfaces some aspect, positive or negative, of the depth dimension through artistic medium. The viewer may participate in the experience of the artist through the painting (or other medium). Both artist and viewer are thus brought subjectively into "the situation." As Christian education attempts to communicate Christianity in the fullness of its meaning, art becomes a way of revealing the situation in a way that not only names the cultural situation, but has the effect of helping persons to see themselves in that situation.

Tillich lifted up a number of elements in art that express something of the threat of non-being, the anxiety of death, meaninglessness, and condemnation. To illustrate how Tillich encourages the use of art in helping to cultivate the questions of existence, I will briefly mention Tillich's use of the categories of the demonic and emptiness in order to show something of the power of art to reveal the spiritual situation of contemporary society.

The demonic in art refers to the demonic expressed in the human situation. Tillich defined the demonic as possession by anxiety that is both creative and destructive.⁶⁸ It is the willful destruction of the good. It is dependent upon the positive and the divine, in the same way that non-being

⁶⁷ See Paul Tillich, "Honesty and Consecration in Art and Architecture," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989).

⁶⁸ Paul Tillich, "The Demonic in Art," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 107.

is dependent on being.⁶⁹ The demonic is "a distortion of the created and its goodness."⁷⁰ It is dependent upon truth which it can distort. Tillich says:

The symbol of eternal death, of which the Bible sometimes speaks, means that nothing good is left which can be distorted. The result is nothingness, since the negative and the evil live only from the good they distort.⁷¹

The demonic may express itself in distorted imitation of the good,⁷² or it may simply distort the good.

Tillich mentions several paintings when he speaks of the demonic in art, and points to the medieval period which was full of this theme. He refers to van Eyck's Last Judgment and its depiction of heaven and hell. Human beings are the predominant characters in both heaven and hell and in the human figures "the divine and the demonic are embodied."⁷³ In hell the human figures are distorted and in agony. In heaven they are so orderly and "appear so superior to our life struggle that they are not only unrealistic and different from the hell figures; they also seem to be in a state in which there is no life or tension, and therefore, no ultimate dynamic."⁷⁴ Not showing the negative element which has been overcome in the depiction of heaven, this painting along with many of the medieval period, have a difficult time in manifesting the power of the eternal in non-idealized forms. "Heaven is

⁶⁹ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 108.

⁷⁰ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 108.

⁷¹ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 109.

⁷² Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 112.

⁷³ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 106.

⁷⁴ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 106.

boring."⁷⁵ The demonic has a fascination that blessedness tends not to have in art, and yet the demonic in art (and in experience) are dependent upon the good for its expression.

The structure of the demonic can be seen in paintings without religious content. In Goya's etchings The Disasters of War the demonic structure of war is revealed. War objectifies everything in order to make it easier to destroy. He points particularly to the caption "Y no hai remedio" (It can't be helped) placed beneath an etching of the mass execution of the Spanish by the French, as expressing possession by the demonic.⁷⁶

Under the anxiety of guilt and condemnation humans put up irrational defenses against the demonic, and thereby, become possessed themselves. Tillich points to Goya's etching Los Caprichos which emphasizes the demonic in the psychology and behavior of the masses mentality. Here is the character of a woman perceived to be demonically possessed (witch or heretic). Tillich points out that

her demonic character produces fear and anxiety in the people who condemned her and who accompany her to her death. This is the basis of the antidemonic persecutions which we call witch trials and inquisition trials. In that situation the demonic enters the persecutors, whom we today would consider as the possessed ones. . . . Look at the faces, the police, the judges, the crowd, all possessed by anxiety, by the same demonic power which they persecute in this woman on the basis of their own anxiety.⁷⁷

The demonic is inherently self destructive and is the expression of the attempt to overcome the anxiety of existence through the elimination of

⁷⁵ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 106.

⁷⁶ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 107.

⁷⁷ Tillich, "Demonic in Art," 108.

anxiety through persecution and destruction of both the good and the demonic.

Another category of the expression of anxiety in art that Tillich emphasizes is the expression of emptiness. Emptiness is "aroused by the threat of nonbeing to the special contents of the spiritual life."⁷⁸

A belief breaks down through external events or inner processes: one is cut off from creative participation in a sphere of culture, one feels frustrated about something which one had passionately affirmed, one is driven from devotion to one object to devotion of another and again on to another, because the meaning of each of them vanishes and the creative Eros is transformed into indifference or aversion.⁷⁹

I have tried to state how Tillich viewed the relationship between symbol and ultimate concern. When the symbols break down, no longer can a meaningful connection with ultimate concern be forged. Neither symbols or spiritual centeredness can be produced at will. The attempt to do so only produces deeper anxiety.⁸⁰ When the loss of meaningful symbols predominates in either the personal or the cultural life, such loss must be recognized. If such loss goes unrecognized or if there is an attempt to produce the symbols to willfully overcome the loss, such loss is described as "desperate emptiness."⁸¹ But, when it is recognized for what it is, then such emptiness according to Tillich can become "sacred emptiness." Sacred emptiness "does not pretend to have at its disposal symbols which it actually does not have."⁸²

⁷⁸ Tillich, Courage to Be, 47.

⁷⁹ Tillich, Courage to Be, 48.

⁸⁰ Tillich, Courage to Be, 48.

⁸¹ Tillich, "Art and Society," 40.

⁸² Tillich, "Art and Society," 40.

It does not try to retrieve the old symbols, but awaits the new. It honors reality even in its emptiness, and in doing so has a part in overcoming it. This being the case, Tillich says of church architecture that "I am most satisfied by church interiors—if built today—in which holy emptiness is architecturally expressed; that is of course quite different from an empty church."⁸³ He cites the Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, Aachen, as exemplary of such sacred emptiness.⁸⁴ Such a building is honest. Tillich says how important honesty is for religion as ultimate concern. "There is truth in every great work of art, namely the truth to express something; and if this art is dedicated to express our ultimate concern, then it should be not less but more honest than any other art."⁸⁵ Honesty condemns imitation of symbols past which are now no longer meaningful, and it condemns the willful "running after novelty" (expressed in trimming or decoration) as a way to cover over the emptiness expressed in the situation.⁸⁶ Sacred emptiness offers a means by which to recognize "the spiritual situation of our technological society" and bids us to wait for God's return through the reorganization of life which will bring us new symbols by which to celebrate the divine-human relationship.

Anxiety is part of the human situation and expresses itself in a variety of destructive (and potentially instructive) ways. In Tillich's emphasis on "the situation" of which anxiety plays such a central role, both in its negative and

⁸³ Paul Tillich, "Theology and Architecture," in On Art and Architecture, eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 193.

⁸⁴ See On Art and Architecture, plates 65 and 66.

⁸⁵ Tillich, "Theology and Architecture," 194.

⁸⁶ Tillich, "Honesty and Consecration in Art and Architecture," 223.

positive expressions, Christian education is challenged to include not only the answer to which Christianity points, but to make it meaningful through honest analysis of the human situation both personally and culturally. Art is especially helpful in facilitating the cultivation of the questions of existence which express the human situation.

Conclusion

Tillich's theological method takes seriously the correlation between the questions of existence and the answers of Christianity. By examining the cultural situation in which the questions express themselves, theology and Christian education can be most helpful in making its answers intelligible and meaningful. Analysis of the types of anxiety which Tillich emphasizes are so central to being human, is a helpful way of tilling the soil of the human predicament so that the answers of Christianity may take root. Tillich's theological method and his emphasis on the situation offer Christian education insights for overcoming the ghettoization of and the diffusion of the Christian message.

Christian education must include an analysis of what the situation is that gives rise to the questions which leads persons to the answers which Christianity offers. Tillich offers a strategy for opening learners to the questions of existence and the answers of Christianity through his existential analysis of the human situation. Effective communication of the gospel message entails recognizing in contemporary experience those questions to which Christianity offers an answer. In the twentieth century a fundamental question of humanity in technological society has been the question of meaning. Having rooted out many basic connections with its natural environment through overlays of technological structures of all kinds, not only has the meaning which once held persons oriented in the world given

way, but the "horror of emptiness"⁸⁷ has been conspicuously revealed. Inclusion of the anxiety which characterizes the cultural and personal situation of our time is important to communicating the theological resources of Christianity in meaningful ways.

Tillich, though writing in the shadows of World War I and II, rather than those of Viet Nam and the demise of the Soviet Union, was part of an era much like ours. He, like us, lived in a world society too often dominated by the impersonal values of technology and war. The dehumanizing powers of technology that drive society and exert an inestimable amount of influence upon individuals, communities and society is yet with us. Tillich's cultural analysis helps us to see the situation all the more clearly, such that the message of Christianity can be seen in direct, meaningful relation with it. Tillich's existential analysis of art makes an especially helpful contribution to education. The arts draw persons into participation in the experiences to which they point. In a later chapter we will return to the role of the arts in education for Christian identity. But first, let us turn to a significant twentieth century figure in the field of Christian education, one who took seriously the method of correlation for educational ministry.

⁸⁷ Tillich, "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," 95.

CHAPTER 4

Foundations for a Relational Approach to Christian

Education: Sherrill's Philosophy of Education

Sherrill's Correspondence Approach

Lewis J. Sherrill (1882-1957) was a Christian education theorist who utilized the method of correlation in the work of Christian education. Sherrill's approach made the polar relationship between the question of the human predicament and the answer of the Christian message central to his philosophy of Christian education. Sherrill kept the contributions of Christianity in attending to the human predicament at the forefront of his philosophy. The engagement of persons with their predicament and with the Christian answer was central to Sherrill's philosophy of Christian education for all ages. As such, Sherrill's approach exemplifies Tillich's correlational method and offers us insight into the components of an integrating approach to teaching the theological resources of Christianity in the ways called for in chapters two and three.

As Sherrill is a pivotal source for developing a correlational approach for education for Christian identity, this is a lengthy chapter. The first section reviews key theological and methodological themes in Sherrill's philosophy of Christian education. The second section is an analysis of his theological perspective with particular attention to his understanding of the question of the human predicament and the answer of Christianity. The last portion of this chapter focuses on key components of Sherrill's educational strategy to guide the work of educational ministry.

Ministerial Education Critiqued

Writing primarily in the period between 1929 and 1957, Sherrill brought together psychological, theological and educational resources to engage

persons with the power of Christianity to transforming the personality and the Christian community. Sherrill's interest in developing an integrative approach to Christian education was fueled in part by his experience as a young pastor. After receiving his seminary education and entering the parish, he experienced a "discontinuity between his theological background and the actual life situations he confronted."¹ His empathy for persons in their suffering and in their desires for meaningful lives led Sherrill to work on an approach to educational ministry that would bridge the gap between lived experience and the healing and growth producing power of Christianity.

His concern to develop more meaningful ways of understanding the human situation and communicating the Christian message, led him back to school and into the field of religious education. In retrospect on his earlier years in ministry he wrote,

I sensed my inability to come to grips with the actual problems that people faced. Some of the young people of the community were irresponsible and unmanageable, and there was the stark reality of more than a few suicides. Neither my theology nor my psychology were fully adequate to cope with these circumstances. . . . It occurred to me that a deeper search must be made into the meaning of the Bible, of theology, of man, and of the most effective ways of communicating through preaching and teaching. This quest has led to exciting new discoveries and continues to open new vistas constantly.²

Sherrill wanted to assist persons in "finding" their lives and growing ever toward their fullest potential through the power and meaning of Christianity. This concern guided the foundation of the approach to Christian education he developed over his lifetime.

¹ Louis B. Weeks, III. "Lewis Sherrill: The Christian Educator and Christian Experience," Journal of Presbyterian History 51 (1973): 236.

² Quoted in Roy W. Fairchild "The Contribution of Lewis Sherrill to Christian Education," Religious Education 53 (1973): 404.

Sherrill wrote during roughly the same period as Paul Tillich, whose work has already been mentioned. Sherrill, like Tillich and others in this period drew heavily from existentialist thought. The social context of the mid twentieth century was disruptive, and the once great influence of progressivist thought was giving way in light of cultural disasters. These disasters, which included World War I, the Depression, the rise of nazism and totalitarianism, and World War II, fostered the realization that society is not evolving into a progressively better society. In fact, when the potential for evil in humanity goes unchecked, then it gains a greater foothold. Existentialist thought took seriously the limited situation of humanity's capacities. Sherrill drew heavily from existentialist psychology and theology for his philosophy of Christian education. Recognizing the limitations placed on humanity by its mixed potential for good and evil, Sherrill saw the possibilities to overcome these limitations through Christian faith. The approach he took was decidedly attentive to existentialist themes and to the psycho-social dynamics of Christian redemption. He wanted to understand Christianity in its relationship to the ongoing growth and health of the personality, something that his own ministerial education had failed to do.

With these concerns in mind, Sherrill focused his approach on the psychologically transformative encounter between God and humanity, forging and refining his approach through his active ministry with persons as a minister, teacher and dean. His approach to the ministry of Christian education brought human experience into relationship with the theological themes of Christianity. In this way he followed the theological method of correlation, communicating the answers of Christianity in relationship with lived experience.

Education as Preparation for Encounter

While Sherrill saw education as an important factor in healthy growth and development generally, he drew out the unique contribution of the personal encounter with God for shaping Christian identity. Sherrill described human beings in the contemporary world as "lost continents" unable to find themselves or a place on which to stand to direct their search for meaning and moral integrity.³ Writing in a period dominated by change, Sherrill saw two world wars (and the weapons of destruction they unleashed), the proliferation of communications technology and the rise of urbanized society in America. All of these factors served to fragment society and undercut personal security. Sherrill thought that as humanity has unlocked the secrets of the universe, it has, in almost equal proportions, found that it is not ready to use the power of these secrets responsibly. As humanity has found itself under the shadow of nuclear disaster and the domination of technology, it has grown more and more frightened and anxious about the possibilities for survival and meaningful existence.

Sherrill explained that until persons can find a place on which to stand to study the problems raised by technological power, their search is complicated by their lostness. Sherrill said:

In some respects this is the strangest aspect in all this strange search: that a man should seek to find what he already is; not only to find out what he is, for that yields him merely a body of information about himself; but to find himself, thus connecting and welding the subject and object, the searcher and the sought, into one so that a man can say he is "sure of himself."⁴

³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 1.

⁴ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 1.

Both the destructive and constructive dimensions of humanity must be wrestled with, understood and respected if persons are to find themselves. Humanity must find a place to stand which transcends these influences if it is to be able to adequately see the situation and to find a way through.

Sherrill saw that the encounter between God and human beings grounds the self in such a way that it can "cope with itself in the modern world and with the world in which we must live."⁵ He understood the human self as an anxious self. In light of the limit situation in which one finds oneself, the personality must face tensions, dualities and fragmentations, both outside and within itself. But, this is not all there is to the personality. The human self also expresses itself in drive, creativity and unity as it finds itself in loving relationships. The "gift of power," as Sherrill named it, expresses the authentic selfhood that empowers the self to stand in the midst of others and to be oriented in its growth toward the life of love through which, in turn, it becomes more solidly grounded. This power comes to persons through liberating relationships, particularly through a freeing relationship with God—a relationship where the self meets God's self in knowledge and love.

Sherrill defined the task of Christian education to be preparation for this type of divine-human encounter. Education cannot force this type of encounter which works "deeper changes in the self,"⁶ but it can familiarize persons with the principles, concepts and experiences that are fundamental to it. In this way Christian education can assist persons of every age and stage of life to appreciate the power of God in their lives and to encounter God's Self

⁵ Sherrill, Gift of Power, x.

⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 157.

in ways that strengthen the health and development of their personalities.⁷ Particularly important to Sherrill's philosophy of Christian education as preparation for encounter are his understandings of revelation and the Bible. Let us turn to these concepts which are central to Sherrill's thought.

Revelation

Sherrill understood the Christian religion as having within it the resources through which persons can fully claim the gifts of human power for celebrating life as created in the image of God and as redeemed by the love of God.⁸ The central resource of the Christian religion for accomplishing this task is the biblical concept of revelation. Sherrill defined revelation as the personal encounter between God and human beings which is established by God's self-disclosure to human beings. In good Calvinist tradition, Sherrill, a Presbyterian, emphasized the power of revelation for establishing the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self.⁹ Such knowledge of God and knowledge of self, made possible through the divine-human encounter, has transformative consequences for humanity. Revelation, defined as God's self-disclosure, lies at the heart of Sherrill's theology of, and education for, encounter.

Since the Bible is the Christian literature which describes the central encounter between God and humanity, it is an unparalleled resource for

⁷ For ways Sherrill applied his insights to education with various age groups see The Struggle of the Soul (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951); Understanding Children (New York: Abingdon Press, 1939); The Opening Doors of Childhood (New York: Macmillan Co., 1939); and Sherrill and John Edwin Purcell, Adult Education in the Church (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1939).

⁸ Sherrill, Gift of Power, ix.

⁹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 68-69.

understanding God's self disclosure and for encouraging the encounter of faith. In his analysis of the role of the Bible, Sherrill distinguished between "the report" of revelation in the Bible and "the fact" of revelation to which "the report" points.¹⁰

The fact of revelation is the first hand experience of the human encounter with God. The Bible points its readers to this first hand experience. Included in the Bible are encounters with God in the natural world, in identity-forming historic events of the Hebrew and Christian communities, in worship and in the person to person encounters which express the love of God, to name a few. These encounters point readers of the Bible to the ongoing relationship between God and humanity. Persons may be drawn into viewing their own lives as a place of meeting between God and humanity through encountering the biblical witness.

This potential for encounter between God and human selves lies at the heart of Sherrill's approach to Christian education. Indeed, it is the organizing principle around which he develops his correlational approach to Christian education. He says:

The doctrine of revelation, then, is a crucial element in the life of the Christian community and in the philosophy of Christian education. Indeed, it could be maintained that it is the determinative element in both. That is to say, any philosophy of Christian education must incorporate a doctrine of revelation in some form or other.¹¹

Sherrill points out that his view of revelation makes for a decidedly positive appreciation of revelation for guiding the work of Christian education. Christian education is to be based upon the premise that God has revealed God's self and continues to reveal God's self to human beings. This

¹⁰ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 66.

¹¹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 68.

means that "the possibility that God can be known and communicated with as Personal Being"¹² is to be incorporated into the educational aims and strategies of Christian education. The work of education is to be aimed at assisting persons in their confrontation with God as Person. Since Sherrill sees the relationship between God and human beings as personal, the design of human relationships in the work of Christian education is extremely important. With an emphasis on creative and loving relationships, education can prepare people and create space for their personal encounter with God.

Sherrill's doctrine of revelation, which arises out of the biblical witness to God's self disclosure, thus guides the development of Sherrill's correlational approach to Christian education. Sherrill's educational approach takes a personalistic view of revelation, emphasizing the present possibility for a relationship between God's Self and the human self. This personalistic view is consistent with the biblical tradition. God is related to humanity. It is of this relationship which the biblical literature speaks. The relationship between God's self and human selves, is the foundation of all other correlations in Christian education. Sherrill names this relationship the principle of correspondence, desiring to express the personal dimension Christian encounter. Sherrill preferred the word correspondence over the word correlation as a means of recognizing the personal dimension in the Christian view of God. For Sherrill, the language of correlation did not adequately emphasize the personal mutuality between God and humanity that gives the correlations between Christian themes and human predicaments their meaning. Therefore, when Sherrill speaks of

¹² Sherrill, Gift of Power, 68.

correspondence, the reader must keep in mind these two dimensions of correlation.

Correspondence then, describes the relationship by which God's self is related to human selves, however this encounter may be experienced. The principle of correspondence "points to the personal mutuality which is simply indicated by such terms as "call" and "answer."¹³ The biblical report witnesses to the experience of God in the Christian community and in the personal experiences of individuals. Inasmuch as the Bible is understood as a living document, putting forth the record of living answers to living questions, it may serve to prepare persons for the encounter with God.

The principle of correspondence points Christian education toward exploring Christian meaning in light of mutual self-disclosure. Sherrill utilized the method of correlation to encourage just this kind of personal participation in education. Sherrill's use of Tillich's method of correlation to organize the message of Christianity into terms that are meaningful to the human situation can be clearly seen in his discussion on using the Bible in Christian education.

The Bible

Sherrill understood the Bible as an important resource for the church because it offers the foundational history which forms the church's identity. The Bible offers a "report" of the "fact" of revelation.¹⁴ In the Bible we find literary presentations and interpretations of God's revelation which were experienced first hand as "fact" in the events of Judeo-Christian history. This literature, taken as a whole, reveals the meaning of divine-human encounter

¹³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 105.

¹⁴ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 66.

not only for persons of the biblical era, but for the ongoing community of faith as well.¹⁵ Sherrill believed that by being in touch with the encounters of faith described in the Bible that persons in the present day might find their own lives confronted and supported by the experience of encounter. In Sherrill's words: "The central purpose of using the Bible in Christian education is to prepare the way for men to perceive God and respond to him in the present."¹⁶ Sherrill's adoption of the method of correlation for the purpose of communicating the biblical materials is aimed at encouraging the ongoing, corresponding relationship between persons' lives and God.

Sherrill's use of the method of correlation can be seen in his description of the Bible as literature through which the answer of God's revelation can be correlated with lived experience. Sherrill looked at the biblical materials through the correlational structure of "predicament" and "theme." Predicament refers to the question side of the polarity described in Tillich's method. Theme refers to the answer side. Taken together, predicament and theme manifest the polarity of the method of correlation.

Within the predicament and theme correspondence, Sherrill understood predicament as referring to the situation of "profound anxiety which we carry as human creatures in an existence where every form of security tends to be

¹⁵ Sherrill, like a number of persons in his day, was quick to distinguish the difference between the report and the fact of the divine-human encounter so that the Bible as "report" would not be misunderstood as the revelation itself. The fact of encounter is the revelation; the report simply points to the fact. In this way, Sherrill hoped to claim the Bible as a necessary resource for building up the identity of the church without falling into the traps of dictation views of Biblical inspiration.

¹⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 95.

threatened sooner or later."¹⁷ Predicament refers to the "deeper rootage" of existential anxiety, whose symptoms are seen in the particular needs and problems which threaten well being and healthy development.¹⁸

Predicament is the underlying structure of existence which places a limitation on human capacity for wholeness. Predicament can be named in a variety of ways: anxiety about oneself; estrangement from oneself, other or God; alienation; lostness; ambiguity. Sherrill suggested that the human predicament, named in a variety of ways, is made relevant to the answer of God's self-disclosure through its correlation with biblical themes.

Sherrill understood themes to be concepts which refer "to some aspect of God's self disclosure to man which persists more or less prominently throughout the Bible."¹⁹ Sherrill was especially concerned that themes be chosen with "attentiveness to what is in the Bible itself, so that they may be themes which spring out of the Bible and are not foisted upon it."²⁰ Sherrill listed a number of themes which show how God's self-disclosure can be seen in the Bible. That list included the themes of creation, lordship, vocation, judgment, redemption, recreation, providence and the life of faith.²¹ While this was not meant to be a complete list, it does show how themes of the Bible

¹⁷ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 107.

¹⁸ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 108.

¹⁹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 109.

²⁰ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 109.

²¹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 110.

may be used to support and confront human beings in ways that overcome the limitations of the predicament of estrangement.²²

Both predicament and theme are found in the Bible, though the literature of the Bible is not always organized in this way. Sherrill followed the lead of biblical theologians of his day who described the Bible in terms of great themes depicting the relationship between God and humanity.²³

Recognizing the complexity of issues raised internally by the Bible and externally by history, the church, science and so forth, Sherrill claimed Bible as a resource for faith by gleaning basic themes from it that represent and respond to lived human predicaments.²⁴ By developing an existential psychological analysis of human beings, Sherrill interpreted the Bible in terms relevant to the present experience of the human predicament.

Organization of biblical materials according to the scheme of predicament and theme is one way of using the method of correlation in Christian education. Not only does the method of correlation offer a helpful way of organizing a wide array of biblical literature in ways that can be more easily

²² It should be noted that Sherrill's themes themselves describe not only God's self-disclosure, but the influence of God's self-disclosure upon the experience of human beings.

²³ See the following works which exemplify the thematic approach in biblical theology: Bernard W. Anderson, The Unfolding Drama of the Bible: Eight Studies Introducing the Bible as a Whole (New York: Association Press, 1953); and Rediscovering the Bible (New York: Association Press, 1953); Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946); George Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1952). In the field of Christian education see Randolph Crump Miller, Biblical Theology and Christian Education (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955). This book correlates the themes of biblical theology and their relationship with developmental stages much in the same way as Sherrill has suggested.

²⁴ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 93.

conceptualized and remembered, but it also establishes common ground between biblical and contemporary experiences of revelation.

The Principle of Correspondence and Christian Encounter

Sherrill's principle of correspondence is inclusive of, but is more than, the simple relating of God's story with the human story by putting the two side by side. It is the correlation of the two through personal communication. God and persons communicate. They correspond with each other, not only in words (for example in prayer), but also in feeling. Seeing the power of personal relationship for the health and growth of the personality, Sherrill saw revelation as a central religious experience to which Christian education must attend.

Sherrill's aim was not simply to teach the biblical materials so that they may be remembered, although Sherrill recognized that this function has a legitimate place in Christian education.²⁵ Rather, Sherrill's deepest concern was to help persons experience the divine-human encounter in their own lives so that they may receive "the gift of power."²⁶ The basic correlation for Sherrill, then, is the correspondence between God's self and the human self. While the basic pattern of predicament and theme as a means of presenting the biblical materials is a good example of Sherrill's use of Tillich's method of correlation, the personal dimension in it must be remembered and emphasized. Sherrill's approach makes use of personalizing language in his correlation approach.²⁷ This differs from Tillich's analytical analysis of the

²⁵ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 95.

²⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, title page.

²⁷ Sherrill chose the word correspondence over Tillich's word correlation in an attempt to underscore this difference in their approaches. Sherrill explains: "This 'principle of correspondence' is similar to, but not identical

correlation of "human existence and divine manifestation."²⁸ Underlying the predicaments and themes of the Bible lies the human predicament, which is met and overcome through the healing and liberating influence of God. Sherrill emphasized the importance of the personal nature of the relationship between God and persons. In describing revelation, Sherrill said: "To speak of revelation as God's self-disclosure implies that what is revealed in the encounter between man and God is not information about God, but God himself as Personal Being."²⁹

Sherrill emphasized that it is this personal dimension of revelation that brings Christian redemption. Underneath the correlation of predicament and theme, and underneath the correlation of human anxiety and God's presence, is the meeting between God's self and the human self in moments of divine-human encounter. It is this personal relationship that defines the principle of correspondence and underlies the method of correlation. Without including the power of divine-human encounter as a healing and liberating possibility, the method of correlation is cut off from the relational dimension which gives it its ultimate power for communicating the Christian message.³⁰

with, Paul Tillich's "method of correlation," as described in his Systematic Theology, I. The similarity lies in the mutuality between revelation and human need. The difference is that "the principle of correspondence" makes the mutuality personal to a degree which Professor Tillich does not seem prepared to affirm." See Gift of Power, 198, n. 1.

²⁸ Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:8.

²⁹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 69.

³⁰ This raises an important question in the revision of some theological language to exclude the personal dimension of God in favor of using non-gendered language in reference to God: If the personal dimension of God is not articulated, then is the personal dimension of healing and redemption limited or lost?

Sherrill's view of the principle of correspondence emphasizes the personal dimension of revelation. The power of revelation is "the fact that the disclosure fits the need."³¹ On one side of the correspondence is God's self disclosure. On the other side of the correspondence is human response. The meeting between God and persons is best described as an encounter between persons. Sherrill emphasized the potential of this divine-human encounter for forming, reforming and transforming human beings.³²

The correspondence approach is aimed ultimately at the growth of the personality in its wholeness. Such growth is seen as an expression of God's good will for creation. Sherrill's approach is oriented around the growth of selfhood in light of Christianity. There is a relationship between the human situation and the message of God in Christianity, even as there is a correspondence between the needs of persons and God's personal response to those needs. Christianity is not to be understood as simply a set of propositions about God or about human beings. It is to be understood as the lively, personal and authentic relationship between God and humanity.

Conclusions about Sherrill's Correspondence Approach

Sherrill's method of correspondence is thoroughly correlational, keeping the questions of human existence in dynamic relationship with the answers of the Christian message. Sherrill's use of the method of correlation for Christian education gathers for reflection the experiences of faith found in past and present communities. It schematizes these experiences according to predicament and theme so that they can be meaningfully articulated and shared as a resource for communicating the meaning of Christianity.

³¹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 105.

³² Sherrill, Gift of Power, 45.

This correspondence between God's self revelation and human experience exemplifies Tillich's correlational method of doing theology and takes it a step further. The principle of correspondence enfleshes the method of correlation to describe the personal processes which communicate the Christian message as a personally transforming message. Both Tillich and Sherrill appreciated the necessity of communicating the meaning of the answer of revelation through engagement of the human predicament. Both were highly interested in the meaning of Christian doctrines and communicating them in terms which twentieth century persons could understand. They saw that unless persons can come to see the answers of the Christian message in terms of their lived experience, then Christianity ceases to have the quality of answer, and thereby loses its essential meaning and contribution for making the world a better place.

As educational foundations, correlation and correspondence recognize the importance of communicating the meaning of Christianity in light of the human predicament. By choosing questions basic to human existence and setting them in dynamic relationship with Christian themes, Sherrill's approach to Christian education as preparation for the divine-human encounter offers an important example of how teaching the theological resources of Christianity contributes to the formation of Christian identity. Since his work is correlational along the lines set out in chapter three, Sherrill's approach assists in overcoming the limitations posed by enculturation and shared-praxis, and engages the theological content of Christianity with the situation for which it is an answer.

Sherrill's View of the Question of the Human Predicament
and the Answer of Christianity

Having looked at Sherrill's emphasis on the correspondence and the transformative power of encounter as foundational for his philosophy of Christian education, let us look more closely at how Sherrill construes question of the human predicament and the answer of God's revelation in Christianity as composing the question-answer polarity of theological correlation. By examining Sherrill's view of the question and the answer more closely, we may be able to more clearly appreciate the educational strategy which he developed.

The Question

Sherrill focused his work on the question of the human predicament on the psycho-social dimensions of human selfhood. What is the situation to which Christianity speaks? Sherrill, drawing on both biblical theology and existentialist psychology, understood the predicament as the anxiety of personal estrangement. Using the tools of depth psychology to examine the questioning side of the question-answer polarity, Sherrill recognized the power of the cultural situation to influence the character of anxiety in a particular age. He recognized that there are some basic human qualities that characterize human development which, in a social context, lay the ground for isolating, estranged and anxious existence.

The Nature of the Personality

Sherrill was particularly sensitive to the human predicament in the technological age. Since mid-century, humanity has found the knowledge and capacity to harness the powers of the atom. It was in the context of post World War II excitement and fear in America that Sherrill wrote The Gift of Power (1955). Sherrill saw a connection between the social situation and problems of human psychological development. In The Gift of Power Sherrill offered his own theory of personality to explain how the divine-

human encounter leads human beings toward growth in freedom and responsibility. Sherrill wrote about the personality in terms of the "marks" of selfhood: vitality, self-determination, self-consciousness and self transcendence. Underlying all these marks of humanity is the human need to thrive. To thrive is to express a sense of growth through an ever increasing sense of purpose and belonging. To thrive is to express "the power of becoming."³³ The specific marks of humanity that express the power of becoming all determine the degree to which the power of becoming is activated. Each mark, while innate to human beings, is also in tension with its opposite: the marks of de-humanization or of "shrinking back."³⁴

The first mark, vitality, expresses the will to thrive in the widest possible way. This mark recognizes that "as a living body the self is a totality."³⁵ Body and mind work together to express the experience of living. They grow in interrelationship through the naturally unfolding processes of growth and development. Vitality expresses the idea of life itself.

The second mark, self-determination, expresses the power of the "will" in the will to thrive. It is that capacity of psychological strength to respond to that which confronts a person either from outer circumstances or from inner tensions. It is the ability to say "Yes" or "No" to the demands of living. As Sherrill puts it "the self strives to protect its integrity by determining its activity from within . . . that is, establishing limits around what he will or will not "willingly" do or permit to be done to him."³⁶

³³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, x.

³⁴ Sherrill, Struggle of the Soul, 10.

³⁵ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 2.

³⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 6.

The third mark, self-consciousness, expresses the consciousness of being a self. While to a certain degree the mark of vitality and self-determination are expressed even in the earliest hours after birth, self-consciousness arises later, when the ability to differentiate between oneself and the world around oneself emerges. As a developmental transition it is "a transition away from referring to himself from the outside, as other persons must do when they speak to him or speak about him. And it is a transition toward stating himself from within as 'I.'"³⁷ This consciousness of being raises particular challenges to human selfhood as it raises the possibility of doubting existence and the threat of non-existence. More will be said of this problem in a later section on the role of relationships in human development. For now it is enough to say that relationships assist the self in gaining self-consciousness (the sense of "I") and in establishing personal identity.

The fourth mark, self-transcendence, is the ability to see oneself "objectively." It moves beyond simple self-consciousness and the ability to say "I." Self transcendence establishes the ability to stand both within and outside oneself. The self can see itself in the act of reflection. A person can see into their lives as both the seeker and the sought.³⁸ Sherrill identifies the capacity for self-transcendence with the life of the spirit. He says,

Self-transcendence means that the human creature, who is in nature and subject to nature, is able also at the same time to transcend nature. He dwells in the finite world of nature which cradles him. And yet he dwells also in a realm of spirit.³⁹

³⁷ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 7.

³⁸ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 9.

³⁹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 10.

Sherrill is primarily referring to the power of intangibles to offer meaning to the self when he speaks of spirit. That is, spirit is the power of meaning and values, abstractions, and deductions; concepts such as those of justice, equality, liberty, love, hate, etc. to influence the personality.⁴⁰ These intangibles express the will to thrive no less than bodily vitality. Self-transcendence accentuates the ability to strive toward meaning. And it is here, in this ability to strive, that the self has the potential to thrive, and has the potential to be problematic, i.e., conflicted in itself and with others.

As the human personality gains the capacities and strengths that mark selfhood it becomes increasingly responsible for its own activity and growth. This responsibility demands that the self withstand both inner and outer threats to itself. It also demands that the self find a way to express itself in wholeness through the freedom to be an individual with particular commitments and styles of living, and to be a part of meaningful relationships with others. The demand to be spontaneously oneself with the consistency we call integrity, along with the demands of physical, emotional and social survival and responsible living in the world, is no easy task. In fact it is these tensions that mark the human being as "a creature of conflict."⁴¹ Inner and outer conflict give rise to suffering which in turn fuel the flames of conflict. The gap between present and future, between reality and potentiality known in the capacities of self-consciousness and self transcendence gives rise to the conflictual self and its search for solutions.

The Relational Nature of the Personality

⁴⁰ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 10.

⁴¹ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1945), 161.

Sherrill pointed out that human beings require togetherness and separateness in their strivings for selfhood.⁴² From the earliest moments of life, the developing person is growing into an "independent" self through its dependent relationships with others, first with the mother, and then with an ever widening network of interpersonal relationships. If one's relationships are adequate to meeting one's physical, psychological, spiritual and social needs, the chances for a healthy interdependence in the personality emerges. The human environment in plays an important role in developing healthy interdependence. So important are relationships to the growth of the self that Sherrill makes the claim that "the self is formed in its relationship with others. If it becomes deformed, it becomes so in its relationships. If it is reformed, or transformed, that too will be in its relationships"⁴³

The Emotional Dimension of Knowing

While there are a number of ways in which relationships influence the development of the self, and with long lasting effects, it is the emotional development of the personality that holds the key to understanding the nature of the self in its relationship to religion, particularly Christianity. Realizing this important link between psychology and theology, Sherrill wrote against the tendency to divide of psychology from religion. Living in a period where theology was battling over whether humanity was progressively evolving, or whether humanity had serious problems which could only be overcome with the outside help of God, Sherrill longed for better integration between psychological and theological study. One result of the division between psychology and theology, and the differing views within

⁴² Sherrill, Gift of Power, 17.

⁴³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 45.

theology was that important psychological categories in Christian thought such as guilt, anger, hope and love, and had lost their integrity and meaning. Sherrill began his book Guilt and Redemption with the idea that too often Christianity is robbed of its meaning by separating its meaning from lived human existence. He wrote: "The habits of thought in much theology have grown so remote from felt reality as to make it seem now almost a heresy to turn theology toward guilt as it is actually experienced in modern life."⁴⁴ Particularly the meaning of the classic themes of Christianity such as sin, guilt, redemption, reconciliation and rebirth, had lost their connectedness with lived experience.

Sherrill pointed behind the intellect to the emotions as determining factors in shaping the character of the personality. Long before an infant can intellectualize his or her world, abstracting concepts from experience and arranging itself in coherence with those abstractions, there is feeling. Persons first relate to their world in physical/emotional terms. The emotions carry and express the self as it develops its own identity. Drawing on the concepts of consciousness and unconsciousness to describe such emotional development, Sherrill explained that through the relationships that make up the human environment of infants, two strata in the personality emerge. One arises from emotional experience, composed of feelings of being loved or hated. The other arises out of development of the intellect. It incorporates the cultural moral code into one's conscious awareness. The emerging self grows in its capacity to reason out right and wrong and carries a picture

⁴⁴ See Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 14.

within itself of others' judgments upon it. Eventually one learns pass judgment on one's own actions.⁴⁵

Given that the totality of the emotional and intellectual responses that guide the development of the self, it is important to look at the feelings that do so much to shape it. Sherrill focuses emotional development around four important and related feelings: hostility, anxiety, guilt and hate and three others: love, acceptance and responsibility. How one's sense of "I" emerges from and is expressed through the interaction of these feelings forms personal identity and gives shape to the conflicts that characterize the human personality.

In brief, Sherrill notes that the growing personality is dependent upon the love and acceptance of others in order to nurture a positive self image. Where this is lacking, where the growing infant is greeted with hostility and rejection from its relational environment, a positive sense of selfhood is threatened and a defensive and negative character is established. The natural relation to thwarted love is hostility which in turn is digested into the self as the questioning of one's own existence. This deep questioning causes self doubt. Anxiety is inherent in the structure of being human.⁴⁶ When the infant is too young to intellectualize experiences of hostility and rejection, it shrinks back as a means of defense and eventually may turn in on itself, internalizing rejection as anger against the self expressed as guilt. This guilt is not easily mended. Guilt, like all emotions, is powerful and cannot be resolved by the intellect alone.⁴⁷ Sherrill explained:

⁴⁵ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 76.

⁴⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 28.

⁴⁷ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 41-42.

... always there is, as it were, a slumbering volcano of primitive emotions underneath, ready to be touched off into unreasoning activity by any threat to the self. When it has been touched off, the result often is some violation of the moral code. In that event it appears to be true that the presence or absence of a sense of guilt, and the intensity of the feeling about that particular thing, are governed not so much by rational consideration connected with the specific act, as they are the underlying structure of more primitive feelings.⁴⁸

Sherrill saw that emotions must be acknowledged if there is to be healing or reconciliation within the self.

Anxiety and Hostility

Guilt is one result of the conflictual personality. Hostility is another expression of the problematic self.⁴⁹ Sherrill sees that anxiety and hostility are more basic than guilt. I have tried to convey this by showing guilt as a response that emerges after the appeasement of anxiety has gone unfulfilled through the expression of frustration, most immediately expressed as anger. Hostility may take a number of forms such as resentment, antagonism, negativism, aggression, hatred, the death wish, etc.⁵⁰ While hostility can be a helpful response to relieving the immediate feeling of being "thwarted," Sherrill stressed that if it cannot be resolved in a trusting relationship characterized by love, then overt aggression and destruction may increase.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 77.

⁴⁹ Guilt and anxiety were major themes being examined by researchers in both psychology and theology during the time Sherrill was writing. Sherrill's work reflects this interest. Today there is less attention to the themes of guilt, anxiety and anger, with more attention to shame, fear and violence. While these new themes bring into view nuances not surfaced in Sherrill's themes, they are fundamentally related to the same dynamics of guilt, anxiety and anger which he explores.

⁵⁰ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 95.

⁵¹ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 103.

Hostility, like anxiety and guilt, is the natural expressions of the dual capacity of the self to claim and reject itself through the two basic requirements of vitality: the need for togetherness and separateness.⁵² The kind of balance within the self that is required to satisfy these alternating and sometimes conflicting needs is not found without gaining the skills of relationship with others and with oneself. Clearly childhood plays an important role in developing these skills and sets up the variance between these two needs in ways that will influence persons throughout their lives. The challenge is to strike a balance between these two needs no matter how well or poorly these needs have been met in the past. This striving for equilibrium is at the heart of vitality. The conflict between the need for separateness and togetherness gives rise to anxiety in a variety of forms. Anxiety then, is the fundamental situation in which persons find themselves.

The Answer

Sherrill presented the answer of Christianity to the problems of anxiety in terms which were compatible with the insights of depth psychology and biblical theology. Sherrill attempted to show what redemption of the personality under the rule of anxiety is and how it is made possible through the encounter with God through faith in Christ. Sherrill characterized the answer of Christianity to the problem of human anxiety as the gift of power. This power, granted to persons as the gracious gift of God's presence in revelation, enables persons to face their lostness and to live in more vital, loving ways.

The Reorientation of the Self

⁵² Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption 96.

The problematic self is not something to be done away with or escaped. That is the temptation of those for whom anxiety, guilt and hostility is especially strong. The problematic self need not cancel out the expression of the integrated self. Rather it is to be recognized for what it is and then a way through can be discerned. Sherrill summarizes this concern when he says:

Any solution which we can find for the predicament of normal anxiety leads sooner or later to a new predicament. Thus if we seek to live entirely without anxiety we incur the risk of forfeiting the very marks of our humanity itself, since it is just these which make us capable of anxiety. And yet we cannot live in an unrelieved state of even normal anxiety without risking the deterioration and the extinction of self transcendence, self-consciousness, self-determination, and eventually vitality itself.⁵³

The reorientation of the self toward equilibrium and wholeness involves recognition and acceptance of the problematic self. Sherrill found help for this task from the insights of clinical psychology.

Recognition and Acceptance of the Conflictual Self

In the book Guilt and Redemption Sherrill discussed psychological healing in both clinical and religious terms. In certain forms of therapy, particularly those that arise out of the psychoanalytic tradition, a key factor in healing psychological distress is the acceptance of difficult experiences through facing them in the presence of the therapist. In such re-living, whether it is by acting out the experience as in psychodrama, or by simply telling and re-telling the problem or traumatic event, a person is given opportunity to be honest about the events that took place in relation to the self, or about the aspects of the self that were revealed in a particular instance. Appreciative of this dynamic found in clinical experience, Sherrill noted that religious confession works in ways similar to reliving experiences in psychotherapy. A

⁵³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 42.

person is given opportunity in a trustworthy environment to face, without defense, their personal difficulty. When personal guilt is involved, such confession or reliving as a means of revealing the truth with which the personality must deal, may be particularly difficult to get to.

The importance of trustworthy relationships in helping such truth telling to happen cannot be underestimated. When the self can be revealed in the presence of another successfully, then it is likely that the reality of the problematic self can be recognized and accepted as part of the self. Acceptance here is not a value judgment. Rather, it is acceptance as a coming to terms with the self and the events that have helped shape it. Sherrill stressed the importance of the therapist's ability to accept the client as they re-live or confess an experience. The acceptance on the part of another makes it possible for the client to accept the reality of oneself. More will be said of the role of relationships in working integration in the personality. What is important here is the ability to recognize the self in its problematic state and to appreciate it as it manifests itself in the processes of attempting integration or re-integration of the personality. When the personality is re-oriented such that it can face itself rather than hide from itself or suffer the destruction of the self, then the possibilities for growth improve.

Agape

Sherrill sees that love helps to create a trustworthy environment in which the self can meet itself. He likens this trustworthy love to agape love. Agape is the Greek word that describes the type of love with which Sherrill is concerned. Agape is "love whose motive is to enhance the status of the loved one."⁵⁴ This type of love is important in two ways. First it must characterize

⁵⁴ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 97.

the relational context in which a person can come to terms with the self. When agape love, the love that frees others, is present, it is more possible for the self to see the trustworthiness of the relational environment and show itself more honestly.

Secondly, agape love is that love which persons must claim if they are to move out of their defensive posture. Agape love, the love that gives itself freely, is possible only after Eros, the love that satisfies need, has been fulfilled. Once the need for others is balanced with the need for independence from others, a persons can shift out of defensive self concern to concern for others. Sherrill examined how agape love can shape the therapeutic relationship. Building on a trusting relationship, the client is encouraged to reveal his or herself at deeper and deeper levels. Sherrill emphasized two significant activities that he believed are important to self acceptance: the experiences of catharsis and transference.

Catharsis involves revisiting powerful experiences through retelling or dramatically re-experiencing intense events which fostered a defensive stance in the personality. Transference involves expressing one's hostility or affection toward another person (the therapist) in order to express displaced feelings toward one's parents or other emotionally significant figure. Transference is thought to enable the overthrow of selfish need, Eros, by engaging the self in an accepting relationship. Expression of the emotions in this way gives rise to the impulse of self-determination. When catharsis and transference are successful, the self is reoriented to a new viewpoint: agape love. The self is freed from an overwhelmingly negating relationship with the self, toward positive self-affirmation. Agape love then, frees the persons

who so love. It frees persons from the entrapping, defenses of self concern and engages the self in non-defensive ways with oneself and others.⁵⁵

Nurturing Relationships

Sherrill recognized the client-therapist relationship as one that offers a framework for disclosing the truth as a means to accepting it. Agape love is crucial both as the context for healing and as the aim of therapy. Sherrill recognized that such a relationship is not limited to the client and therapist relationship, but may characterize any number of relationships in which a person is involved. The reorientation of the self toward integration is possible only in the context of these kinds of relationships. If the therapist is the only nurturing relationship in the life of a person in the midst of many destructive relationships outside the office, the progress made in therapy may not ultimately assist the suffering person toward new and more integrated life.

In The Opening Doors of Childhood, Sherrill explains how parents may be the nurturing context for their children, helping them to develop from the earliest age a trustworthy context for the development of agape love in their lives. In The Gift of Power, he explains how the Christian community can be

⁵⁵ It is to be noted that during the same period in which Sherrill was writing, Eric Fromm was writing about agape love in hierarchical relationship with Eros love. Fromm's work has been critiqued as neglecting the value of the human body and of intimacy (see for example, feminist authors such as Carter Heyward). While Sherrill does make a distinction between agape and Eros love, he does not define Eros as strictly bodily sexual love. It is rather love whose motive is "emotional encirclement and capture of the loved one. Sex activity and sex feeling comprise one, but only one of the many manifestations of Eros; it cannot be too strongly emphasized that Eros love is not restricted to sex; neither is sex in its richer manifestations solely a matter of Eros" (Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 98). Sherrill's appropriation of the Hebraic biblical perspective which is both integrative and positive toward the relationship between the body and the spirit will be examined in a later section.

a trustworthy context for the same. One's relationship with God can also be a context for encountering agape. The emphasis to this point has been on the power of human relationship in facilitating the kind of equilibrium that characterizes an integrated personality. Let us now look at how faith enables transformation.

Faith in Christ, Transference and Transcendence

Sherrill saw faith in Christ as a point of departure for a "revolution" in the personality.⁵⁶ Drawing heavily from the New Testament depiction of Christ and the effect he had on people through his life, death and resurrection, Sherrill explained that when people met Christ, they also met themselves in a new way. This new view of themselves included acceptance of responsibility for their lives, made personally meaningful through the act of repentance. It also included the successful transcending of their own resources to heal themselves through faith in Christ. Sherrill explained that faith in Christ has been described by the writer of the gospel of John as a "believing into Christ."⁵⁷ This kind of faith can be understood as a person turning their emotional hostilities and attachments toward Christ, and Christ receiving them so that healing takes place. This dynamic has already been described in the therapeutic relationship with the therapist as catharsis and transference.

In Christian experience, catharsis and transference begin when a person offers confession in a spirit of repentance and faith. Sherrill explained it this way:

⁵⁶ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 177.

⁵⁷ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 181.

The point at which the shell of an individual's defenses begins to break is a time when that person is starting to "change his mind;" and repentance means just that: a change of mind, particularly about oneself. . . . When the shell of self-defenses has been shattered, one is becoming capable of both giving and receiving a new kind of love. Christian faith commences at the moment when that affectionate trust begins to be given to Christ."⁵⁸

Faith in Christ re-grounds the self in self acceptance. Repentance without faith takes the healing dimension out of the dynamic of transference, just as catharsis is only one dimension of healing. Without the full expression of the emotional dimension of guilt through transference of those feeling onto the therapist, the expression of guilt, though honest, may fall back on itself with no release from the grip that anxiety, guilt and hostility have upon the personality. Repentance without faith is not ultimately liberating since the power of love which comes from beyond the self is missing. Hence, the kind of transference that faith involves moves a step further than that of therapy. It transcends the problematic personality by engaging agape love that "comes to us from outside the human scene, seeking to liberate us from our hostility, anxiety and guilt."⁵⁹ Coming from God, the human dilemma is transcended. Both the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus and the spiritual presence of God in the risen Christ are avenues by which the transference of faith, as transcending the human dilemma, takes place.

Sherrill pointed out that incarnation was not an unfamiliar idea to those on the ancient human scene. What made Christianity unique and scandalous to reason was that in the incarnation God had entered into the human scene such as to suffer and die, and rise again to life. In the incarnation God became a participant in the field of human relationships,

⁵⁸ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 177-78.

⁵⁹ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 186.

entering into them through going into the depth of human anxiety, suffering and death. So Sherrill stated that "the core of the earliest Christian theology inevitably had to do with the Cross."⁶⁰

Christ's death and resurrection are important in helping a person to "believe into Christ" through the act of faith. No longer is a person alone in their experience of anxiety, fear, hostility and guilt. Someone is there with them. Someone who has gone down into the depths of existence and was raised. This deep and personal presence supports persons in facing themselves through the act of faith in Christ. Faith in Christ expressed through the specific events of confession, repentance, and the transference of faith enables persons to claim their lives in new ways, ways which direct the personality along new lines. Expression of one's emotions by means of faith in Christ releases the self to become a new creation. Such an act of faith then has the effect of shifting the personality from a "law" oriented approach to redemption to an emotionally oriented one. Sherrill appreciates Paul's reconfiguring of the problematic personality along these lines:

With Paul guilt as fact and guilt as responsibility arise out of a malignant relationship with God, and the roots of guilt cannot be reached by being a good man, or by being faithful to any code of law—that is, by the "works of the law"; they can only be reached by a change in the emotional relationship with God.⁶¹

Sherrill affirms Paul's claim that a person is not redeemed by works of self defense, but rather, is justified by faith. Sherrill drew a connection between the doctrine of justification by faith and the need of the personality for inner self defense. The personality changes when "the springs of human action

⁶⁰ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 179.

⁶¹ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 180.

which are in the realm of feeling and emotion" change.⁶² When the spirit of Christ is viewed both as present with a person in their deepest emotional being, and as working toward transformation through that deep relationship, then the springs of the self may change to bring about changes in the personality.

Sherrill noted how easily people avoid the way of faith. Faith is often replaced with religious activity. Because this sidestepping of faith is so common and has led to misunderstandings and misgivings about the meaning of faith in Christ, we do well to include brief mention of them here. The displacement of faith is found whenever theology or the church become substitutes for faith.⁶³ The danger of such displacement of faith to theology as theory or doctrine is that it can be manipulated to protect the self from itself. Theology becomes a defense mechanism rather than a resource for faith. The same danger holds of the displacement of faith in Christ to the authority of the church, no matter how that authority is conceived. Rather than assisting the self toward wholeness, the church becomes a place for defending the self from the wholeness that repentance and faith in Christ bring. When loyalty to something other than Christ takes up the central place in a person, the defensive and offensive nature of the self takes root, as is exemplified in holy wars, inquisitions and interdenominational conflicts. Sherrill noted that hostility and anxiety often increase when faith is displaced by theology or the church, particularly one's own church.⁶⁴

⁶² Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 213.

⁶³ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 183.

⁶⁴ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 186.

In addition to the displacement of faith which prevents the healing dimension of faith to take hold, the externalization of redemption also keeps persons disengaged from the integrating dynamics of faith. Externalizing redemption is a non-personal solution to the problems of anxiety, guilt and hostility. When God is not viewed as participating in human suffering, the problem of guilt is insoluble.⁶⁵ The Spirit of Christ, identified with the Spirit of God, can "penetrate the depths of the emotional underworld and transform it."⁶⁶ Without engaging this spiritual possibility, the problem of redemption is solved outside the self. Upholding the self through ritual, sacrifice and law are some ways persons try to achieve redemption. These fall short of a solution since they do not adequately effect changes in the depths of the self. Theology, the church, ritual, sacrifice and law all have a role in Christian believing, but where they are not understood in light of faith in Christ, they cannot enable the reformation of the whole personality.

The Unity of the Personality: Bodily Spiritual Life

Faith in Christ involves identifying "with" Christ, who is "with" persons even in the depths of their emotional worlds. But what is the nature of the personality such that the re-working of the emotional world brings redemption to person's whole life? Sherrill turned to biblical concepts on the unity of the person in order to understand the wholeness that is achieved through the life of faith.

Sherrill reminded his readers of the Hebrew view of persons as unity of body and soul. He said that in order to understand the Hebrew view, one

⁶⁵ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 195.

⁶⁶ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 195.

must work to get rid of the Greek notion of the person as body *and* soul.⁶⁷ The personality is best understood not as body and soul, but as "animated body."⁶⁸ The soul comes to life in the body through the breath of God. Sherrill called this "the life principle of the body." The spiritual life of a person is continuous with their bodily life as life created by God. The life of a person, and the spiritual life of a person are the same thing by definition of God breathing life into the person (Genesis 2:7).

Sherrill points out that the biblical concept of soul indicates this unity. Body parts are viewed as integral to the expression of the personality. For example, the role of the nostrils is seen as the avenue by which the Spirit of God enters, the heart is seen as the seat of knowledge, will and character, and the bowels are seen as the locus of strong emotion, be it of anxiety or of yearning. "Viewing the body as a whole the Hebrew is able to make the statement that 'the soul [nephesh; A.V. and A.S.V. 'life'] of the flesh is in the blood.'⁶⁹ Sherrill makes the connection between the modern day view of the conscious and unconscious self with the Hebrew view that understands that consciousness is spread throughout the entire body.⁷⁰

For Sherrill, the breakthrough of Christianity is its emphasis on understanding how God enters into the depths of the person through the emotions as the springs of human action.⁷¹ This view is especially developed in the writings of Paul as a Jewish Christian, but can also be clearly

⁶⁷ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 190.

⁶⁸ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 191.

⁶⁹ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 191.

⁷⁰ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 192.

⁷¹ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 213.

seen in Acts where the revolutionizing of the personality is directly connected with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Wholeness comes into the body through an inflow of the Holy Spirit which permeates the entire being of a person. There is a shift in the identity of the self through identification with Christ as the object of faith and through the gift of new life given by the power of the Spirit.

Sherrill points out that Paul uses both the terms body and soul when describing a person in their wholeness, but that Paul tends to prefer body. The body is viewed as the loci of the personality. The bodily resurrection, so important to Paul, is indicative of the wholeness of a person's redemption.

Sherrill saw that agape love, found in Christ, "can invade" the unconscious to re-direct the shape and flow of the personality. The whole being of a person, described as animated body, is redeemed. Sherrill goes into a much more detailed discussion of the role of the body for expressing the human spirit in Paul's writing than I have reflected here. My point is simply to recognize how Sherrill attempted to incorporate the wholeness of the self as animated body into his own discussion of redemption as related to the integration of the personality. Certainly, this inclusion of the body in trying to understand the emotional life of persons and its transformation through Christian faith, points to the thoroughness of the Christian view of guilt and redemption. Bodily life is integrated with the spiritual life. This suggests that the body must be included in developing an approach to education for Christian identity.

Fellowship as Supportive of the Relationships of Faith

So important was the body to New Testament thought as the image of wholeness that the fellowship of the Christian community is characterized as the body of Christ. Sherrill explained:

The idea of the church as the Body of Christ gives Christianity one of the most profound conceptions of society ever expressed. . . . The church as the Body of Christ is a society within whose relationships the divine pledge of redemption from guilt is meant to be realized.⁷²

The struggle of the soul for wholeness is ongoing. Even when a person has experienced the healing and transforming dimensions of faith, the potential for a divided self remains. Human relationships that encourage persons in their faith are important to the continued transformation of the personality through one's relationship with God in Christ. Such supportive fellowship is exemplified by verbalizing the meaning of agape love, and by incarnating that love in the emotional tone of human relationships. This implies that the network of human relationships, as they are found in the smaller unit of the family and in the larger unit of the local Christian fellowship, need redemption even as the individual person needs it.

Sherrill recognizes that relationships of a community can injure as well as heal. Therefore he is quick to attend to the importance of the continual reformation of the Christian community. Sherrill reminded readers of the problem of abstracting the conflicts within the self or within the community by placing one's faith in theological formulation or in the church, rather than in God. The temptation is great according to Sherrill at all levels of church life, from the temptation of clergy to view their need and role in redemption as different from the laity, to the temptation of the church to confuse its identity with denominational distinctiveness.

The community of faith must recognize the presence of anxiety, hostility and guilt among the members which constitute its very body.

⁷² Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 216.

This concept includes but pushes past the idea of the body as analogy, to actually functioning by means of the interrelationship of its parts. The body of the fellowship is to be the network of relationships through which redemption is concretely expressed, even as it is expressed in the body of the individual. Sherrill concludes:

In proportion as it [the church] fulfills its redemptive mission it becomes a training ground for liberating the conscience from bondage to external codes and social pressures, and liberating it into the widest freedom in the universe, which is freedom to be on God's side in the lifelong, age long conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.⁷³

If the community of faith is to be a context which assists people in confronting their lives and claiming the gift of power that comes through the divine-human encounter, then it must be a body of persons who as a community are guided by the confrontation and acceptance of God in their lives together. As the Christian community sees its need for redemption, than it may become a more supportive place for helping persons to face honestly their lives and claim the redemption which is offered in Christ.

Summary

This section has focused on how Sherrill understood the human predicament and the Christian message as answer to it. Sherrill defined the human predicament in psychosocial terms, focusing in on the anxiety of estrangement in relationship to experiences of guilt and hostility. While such experiences are natural responses to conflicts within and outside the self, anxiety, hostility and guilt inhibit love.

Sherrill saw the Christian answer to the human predicament in terms of divine revelation. Sherrill understood revelation as God's self disclosure

⁷³ Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, 244.

known through the encounter between the human self and God's Self.⁷⁴ "In the encounter itself what is disclosed is some aspect of infinite, perfect Selfhood, being unveiled in some form of relationship with finite, imperfect selves."⁷⁵ Revelation as encounter involves the dual qualities of acceptance and confrontation. In confrontation God and a person come face to face and their difference and separateness is acknowledged.⁷⁶ In communion, God and a person are also face to face, but this disclosure is characterized by support and security. This separateness and togetherness maintains the integrity of God and the human personality in their relationship with each other. Both divine opposition and divine affirmation are crucial to an adequate understanding of the meaning of revelation. Both enable the self to face itself honestly and in doing so enable release from the disorientation of conflict toward a life empowered by love.

Revelation as personal encounter offers a means of healing the brokenness of the human personality known in the experience of anxiety and particularly known in the experience of estrangement from oneself and other persons. Thus, Sherrill emphasizes that "revelation is redemptive in nature."⁷⁷ Therefore, this answer which brings healing and offers personal meaning is the foundation of Christian identity. Christian identity is best understood as knowing oneself in light of the revelation of God in Christ. One comes to know oneself through the encounter which communicates togetherness and separateness, acceptance and confrontation with God. Sherrill acknowledged

⁷⁴ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 69.

⁷⁵ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 69.

⁷⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 69.

⁷⁷ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 78.

the reality of anxiety, and he acknowledged the possibility of overcoming it through reconciliation, which is experienced as redemption. Understanding revelation in personal terms draws persons into healing and meaningful relationships with God. By casting revelation in personal terms that cohere with the human need for positive relationships to center the personality, Sherrill offers a way to engage persons with the meaning of Christianity.

Components of Sherrill's Educational Strategy

In the previous two sections of this chapter I have attempted to show that Sherrill's philosophy of Christian education makes a significant contribution education for Christian identity through his adoption of the method of correlation. After reviewing Sherrill's commitments to a theology of encounter and how the method of correlation, based upon the principle of correspondence, can be used to effectively teach the biblical materials as foundational for encouraging the encounter of faith, we looked at how Sherrill understood the encounter of faith as transformative of the human personality. Sherrill's highly personal language reflects his commitment to a theology of encounter and to the importance of personal relationships for the formation, reformation and transformation of the personality. Let us now turn to Sherrill's educational strategies which support and express these commitments.

Two-Way Communication

The deeper changes of the self which take place through the personal encounter with Christ dominated Sherrill's educational interests. As persons enter into trusting interpersonal relationships with each other and with God, their lives may be transformed toward greater openness and love. Hence, Sherrill's educational strategy focused on building trusting relationships.

Two-way communication is the way Sherrill characterized the type of communication that builds trust. Two-way communication involves people together in learning about themselves and each other. It is communication which flows back and forth in creative and affirming ways.⁷⁸

Sherrill pointed out that one way communication is predominant over two way communication in our society. Communication often flows in one direction rather than in mutual dialogue. Sherrill called it communication by pressure.⁷⁹ It is the communication of the radio, the television and the billboard. It is the communication of personal and mass manipulation. One-way communication does not invite the self affirming reaction of response. Rather, it pushes people into defensive postures of resistance. In one-way communication the self has to defend itself from others. Sherrill said:

We have to armor ourselves against it; for if we do not do so we lose our own integrity and become robots to be pulled and hauled from outside ourselves. But the more we close ourselves against it, the less is our separateness overcome.⁸⁰

One-way communication thus isolates persons in defensive separateness. What is needed is communication which becomes a communion of selves, supportive of human community as healthy togetherness and separateness, and not communication which further instills isolation and estrangement.

Two-way communication involves patterns of listening and responding, support and confrontation in ways that recognize and honor the selves being revealed in conversation. It promotes participation and helps to relax one's defenses. Two-way communication involves a "giving forth of at least a part

⁷⁸ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 121.

⁷⁹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 120.

⁸⁰ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 120.

of one self who is in communication with another. It is putting some part of the self or even all of the self into the keeping of another so that the two have this much in common between them."⁸¹ When persons fail to fully participate in the dialogue of fellowship, verbally or non-verbally, barriers to communication emerge. Isolation and defensiveness arise and work to shut down two-way communication.

Sherrill showed how a teacher's self revelation can influence the educational process. The teacher's personal style of communication greatly affects the learning process. Sherrill saw the significance of the "personal motif" to the processes of dynamic communication. The personal motif refers to "the self's typical way of responding to other selves as he encounters them. . . . This fairly uniform way of responding to many different persons and in many different situations is his motif."⁸² Some examples of the personal motif are: the outgoing self, the passive dependent self, the aggressive self and the affect-hungry self.⁸³ The power of the personal motif may help to open up and engage the communication process or it may help to shut it down. Manipulation, seduction and simple force are examples of how one's personal motif may work against two way communication. Sherrill emphasized that the potential of self expression to influence two-way communication must be acknowledged in the educational process. The goal of two-way communication demands that teachers be aware of their personal motifs, so that they may enhance rather than destroy the communication process.

⁸¹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 85.

⁸² Sherrill, Gift of Power, 169.

⁸³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 169.

Self revelation plays a role in the accepting and confronting aspects of education for encounter. Self revelation encourages persons to meet each other in an attitude of acceptance and also in an attitude that recognizes that human beings are called towards growth. When fellowship incorporates acceptance and confrontation into its communication dynamics, then the tone of interpersonal relationships, becomes the "transmuting of love from love that is self-seeking and self-serving, to love which is self-giving and other-affirming."⁸⁴ While there is always the possibility that relationships will fall into demonic dissolution and disrepair in education, good relationships can take on the character of spiritual fellowship. The power of God to influence the quality of relationships is central to Sherrill's strategy.

The dynamics of change in the self and the dynamics of interaction become Spiritual when the people in the koinonia are open and responsive to this divine dynamic which comes forth from an abyss of love and power. In fellowship God imparts himself to his people as he leads them forth along the uncharted way.⁸⁵

Two-way communication supports the spiritual quality that is desired in Christian education.

By adopting the strategy of two-way communication, Sherrill called for a limited use of purely problem-centered, or answer-centered education. A problem centered approach is useful to include, for this helps to communicate the "situation" to which Christianity makes its answer. But, problem centered education can easily become an expression of one-way communication if the emphasis on acceptance and encouragement of student expression excludes the dimensions of challenge and confrontation. Sherrill critiqued problem centered education as not including the confrontational

⁸⁴ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 173.

⁸⁵ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 173.

side of encounter.⁸⁶ Students should be challenged to encounter new ideas, experiences or situations which may call them into new directions of growth.

Student centered education suffers a similar limitation. It draws one sidedly from the powers already within the student. It does not give students new information or hold out insights which might draw them into growth. It is high on discovery and low on the offering of new insights made possible by articulating solutions or answers in tandem with the problem. In this way both problem centered and student centered approaches become illustrative of one-way communication, even though this may not be their intent.

On the other hand a purely answer centered education also tends to become one-way communication, much like the radio, television and billboard already mentioned. While it is important to present new ideas which will encourage the student to grow, without acceptance communicated through appreciation of the student as they are in the present, attempts to change students may reverse the processes of self revelation. The student or the teacher may withdraw into a defensive posture. Two-way communication recognizes the power of the defensive posture, honors it and seeks to encourage a more open posture in order to communicate and encourage preparation for the transformative relationship of the I-Thou encounter.

Biblical Drama

How can Christian education facilitate the two-way communication involved in Christian encounter? Sherrill lifted up two significant avenues for such communication. One avenue is to explore biblical literature as a drama which speaks of the divine-human encounter. The Bible offers a

⁸⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 152.

witness to God's confirming and renewing presence in creation, history, revelation and personal experience. Sherrill emphasized the importance of using the Bible in Christian education as helping persons to know about God's revelation and the vocabulary that describes it. Such knowledge plays an important role in encouraging the personal and ongoing encounter between God and humanity. Sherrill believed that the Bible presents the corresponding relationship between God and humanity and therefore is to be a primary resource in education for encounter. Indeed, without the Bible the church forgets who it is and the message that has formed it in its living existence.⁸⁷ Sherrill developed a way of talking about and engaging persons with the biblical drama. By putting the questions and answers raised in the Bible in dialogical relationship with each other, the message of revelation becomes more accessible, meaningful and memorable.

Sherrill offered a scheme to organize biblical themes as a way of helping persons to enter into the biblical materials. This scheme was based upon the theology found within the Bible itself. These themes are not meant to be narrowly defined or completely discrete from each other. Rather they are meant organize the biblical witness so it can speak about the experiences of persons in the Bible and to the experiences of persons in the contemporary context. By correlating predicaments and themes, Sherrill helps to make biblical meaning more accessible.

⁸⁷ Sherrill wrote: "The Bible and the church stand in close but strange relationship to each other, in two respects. The first is that each is dependent upon the other. This dependence is so intimate that if they are separated, the Bible apart from the church becomes an object of scientific curiosity merely, or more likely something to be forgotten; while the church separated from the Bible soon has little left to distinguish it from other human institutions." See Gift of Power, 93.

Sherrill lifted up seven themes which correspond to human predicament of estrangement in the Bible which can guide the use of the Bible in Christian education. They are creation, lordship, vocation, judgment, re-creation, redemption, providence and the life of faith. All of these themes represent God's redemptive presence with humanity in God's self disclosure experienced by persons in the Bible and their reporters and editors. Sherrill chose these themes with a concern for the significance they have for the situation which characterizes human existence. They "seek the points at which revelation bears directly upon the situation."⁸⁸ In this way Sherrill hopes to appreciate the work of scientific and literary analyses of biblical scholarship, while not allowing the highly technical side of those insights to miss the existential import of the biblical materials.⁸⁹ Sherrill believed that "the relevance of revelation lies in the fact that the disclosure fits the need."⁹⁰ Let us look at a few of Sherrill's chosen predicaments and themes as a way of illustrating how he suggests the biblical materials could be engaged as supportive of two-way communication.

The theme of creation is understood to be God's self disclosure in the creation of universe. All creation owes its origin and ongoing existence to the creative power of God.⁹¹ Sherrill's names the predicament to which the theme of creation is correlated as "man's misapprehension of himself, his

⁸⁸ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 104.

⁸⁹ As previously noted, Sherrill drew from the thematic approach of biblical theologians of his day. In this period many biblical theologians were trying to emphasize the meaning of the text in its context and in its relevance for contemporary thought.

⁹⁰ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 105.

⁹¹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 112.

world and God."⁹² The theme of creation in the Bible calls persons into identities defined by the status of belonging to creation as the good, self expression of God. By recognizing the relationship that God has with persons and with the world through creation, persons can know that they are not alone and that there is meaning and purpose for their lives. As part of God's creation, persons are identified as God's own. This has redemptive power for the predicament of "lostness" which is expressed in both personal and social disorientation. Persons who cannot see their connectedness with those around them suffer. In helping persons to see that all persons and all creation belong to God, then the predicament of estrangement is in part met and overcome. To celebrate this connectedness through exploration of a great biblical passage like Psalm 19, is to bring the theological resource of the theme of creation to bear one's own experience.

Another theme Sherrill lifted up was the theme of providence. Sherrill says "God's disclosure of himself in providence is the exercise of his sovereign will through all the vicissitudes of existence in such a way that his love ultimately overcomes evil."⁹³ This theme is central to the experiences of those persons in the Bible who struggled with the tensions between faith and doubt. Sherrill correlates the theme of providence with the problem of "undiscerned meaning." It raises the ultimate question as to whether anything, history, the personal life, the natural workings of the universe and nature have meaning. Sherrill points out that "to fail to ask this question is to fail to be fully human. But to ask it is to face bafflement."⁹⁴ The biblical

⁹² Sherrill, Gift of Power, 112.

⁹³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 115.

⁹⁴ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 115.

answer recognizes there is meaning and ultimate meaning in the providence of God and encourages persons not only to "affirm the meaning which we perceive" but to also "stand before the mystery of good and evil."⁹⁵ To learn about classic figures like Abraham and Job, and how they were confronted by meaningless suffering, is to stand with them in one's own suffering. To correlate their predicaments and their stories with the providence of God is to begin to see the power of revelation that can be found in human experience, even the experience of one's own life.

Creation and providence are but two of the themes Sherrill offers as a means of opening up biblical literature in ways that assist persons to engage it. But, even these two examples illustrate the power with which Bible study may open persons to their religious heritage and to their own experience. By making the Bible a central witness not only to revelation, but also to the human experience, Sherrill offers a means by which the Bible can become more useful for encouraging Christian identity.

Sherrill's scheme of predicament and theme not only make the Bible accessible to persons, it also strengthens the Christian vocabulary which can encourage meaningful communication within the Christian community. By learning the Bible stories through this type of scheme, persons may gain confidence in what the Bible says and the ways in which its message is relevant to the human situation. By focusing the predicament and theme in their relation to each other, teachers may assist persons in experiencing a sense of acceptance or confrontation to their own orientation in living.

Choice of biblical passages which most clearly express God's self disclosure in creation and human responses to it is an important task for the Christian

⁹⁵ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 116.

teacher. The teacher must know enough about a passage and its theme in the Bible as a whole to be able to promote two way communication. Teachers are often tempted to tell students the meaning of a passage rather than engaging them with it if active participation.

Biblical Symbols

Another avenue Sherrill sees as helpful for opening two-way communication that can lead to encounter is to explore biblical symbols. Symbols hold great importance in biblical and theological thought. Symbols both communicate meaning and call forth a response which cannot be assuredly programmed or anticipated. As Sherrill pointed out a symbol "sets the mind soaring out into an unbounded area, stimulates the mind to do its own work of recognizing the meaning in the symbol and encourages the quest for further meaning."⁹⁶ Since working with biblical symbols lead persons into personal exploration of the divine-human encounter in this way, Sherrill calls for greater emphasis on teaching biblical symbols in Christian education.

The openness of the self made possible through communication through symbols encourages the recognition of the self and also opens the self to deeper recognition of the biblical message as transformative. Sherrill says: "curiosity, wonder, surprise and incredulity are the beginnings of two way communication. For the symbol has called for some kind of question, and the question in the first movement of the self into that dialogue of two-way communication in which man participates in the symbol and in which it may be, he encounters God."⁹⁷ The evocative nature of symbols points us toward

⁹⁶ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 126.

⁹⁷ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 127.

the work of educating persons in symbols, particularly the symbols of encounter in the Bible. Not only does this support the role of Biblical in preparing persons for encounter, it helps to create a common vocabulary for the Christian community.⁹⁸ Without a common vocabulary, the Christian community loses an important means of communication which forms its identity.

Sherrill categorized biblical symbols as "representing some aspect of God's disclosure of himself to man and some aspect of man's perception of that disclosure or his response to it."⁹⁹ Sherrill developed lists of biblical symbols of encounter which he put into categories. These categories of symbols included: objects like bread, tables, tears, altar, water and ark; forces of nature like life, fertility, sickness, fire, waves and plague; persons in roles like the king, the potter, the mother, the shepherd, the brother and the friend; feelings like love, compassion, mercy, wrath and fear; spontaneous actions like speaking, healing, thwarting, mending, planting and remembering; ritualized actions like offering sacrifice, wearing special garments, rites of purification, setting slaves free, fasting and feasting.¹⁰⁰ These are only a few of the symbols and types of symbols found in the Bible. By encouraging familiarity with biblical symbols Sherrill showed the Bible to be enriching and full of variety. In a very natural way, experiences with symbols can open people to their lives, to others and to God. Because symbols involve two-way communication, they assist in generating interest and participation in ways that one-way communication cannot do.

⁹⁸ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 126.

⁹⁹ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 128.

¹⁰⁰ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 128-32.

It can be added at this point that working with symbols which represent the contemporary lived situation in society is equally important to meaningful theological education. Sherrill worked with biblical symbols and sought to relate them to the encounter with God as a way of fostering personal transformation. But, the symbols which rise up in a given culture express the current situation in which persons exist. Cultural symbols may also help persons to encounter their lives.¹⁰¹ Tillich's tools of existential cultural analysis offer some insights regarding education in the questions of existence. More will be said of Tillich's cultural analysis in another section. Here, it is enough to say that education for Christian identity must be education in the biblical symbols and also in the symbols of contemporary life. In this way, the correlation between the Christian religion and lived experience may work together to prepare the way for the divine-human encounter.

Contributions of Sherrill's Educational Approach

Lewis Sherrill points Christian educators toward a highly personal approach to teaching the theological resources of Christianity through his correlational correspondence approach. Christianity is to be communicated by engaging it as the answer to the fundamental human predicaments of isolation, alienation and estrangement. When the personality becomes deformed through defensive responses to threats to the self, the creative side of the life of faith shuts down. As Christian education incarnates and educates about the loving presence of God, it can become a healing and liberating influence for persons. Christian education can do this by helping

¹⁰¹ During the period in which Sherrill and Tillich wrote there was great interest in the relationship between Christianity and its cultural forms, such as literature and art. Symbols were particularly important to this discussion. For example, see Symbolism in Religion and Literature, ed. by Rollo May, (New York: G. Braziller, 1960).

persons to consider the importance of experiences of separateness and togetherness, both with other human beings and with God as they work to establish personal identity.

Sherrill saw two-way communication as supporting the relational needs of persons. Two-way communication encourages persons to meet honestly in a spirit of openness and respect. Two-way communication is a crucial factor in the formation, reformation and transformation of the personality and must be included in the correlational processes of education.

Sherrill saw two-way communication as an end in itself and perceived it as an "ultimate good."¹⁰² Sherrill admits that the communion found in spiritual two-way communication is "the religious form of the ultimate good which we seek in secular terms whenever we affirm a belief in democracy or plead for a community of nations in which there shall be peace."¹⁰³ In speaking of the desire for and the processes of two way communication, Sherrill said "the secular vision and the religious vision have a deep kinship."¹⁰⁴

Focusing on the power of personal encounter to enable growth, Sherrill lifted up biblical themes, stories and symbols as representing the dynamics of encounter. By correlating categories of biblical theology with categories of lived experience, Sherrill offered Christian educators an approach to communicating the theological resources in ways that encourage the divine-human encounter which establishes Christian identity. Both the human environment of Christian education and the theological resources to be

¹⁰² Sherrill, Gift of Power, 191.

¹⁰³ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 191.

¹⁰⁴ Sherrill, Gift of Power, 191.

taught encourage Christian encounter. Both are needed if the questions and answers to which Christianity speaks are to be adequately attended to.

Education is a human process which involves human relationships which can guide and shape the changes which take place in the self. Education in the Christian view presented here is also a place where persons can be prepared for their own redemptive encounter with God. Christian encounter may take place within or outside the context of Christian education. What is of concern here is that Christian education be an influence which can positively promote and support Christian encounter wherever it takes place.

The correlational correspondence approach that Lewis Sherrill developed is a model for crafting an approach to education for Christian identity which recognizes the human and divine dimensions of Christian education. His emphasis on critical exploration of experience and personal involvement in making correlations between the human predicament and God's presence in revelation, serves to open the enculturation approach toward the two way communication so important to encounter. Incorporating the human predicament into Christian education serves to establish common ground between Christians and the world around them. Seeing the continuity of the human predicament among all people, may prevent the Christian message from being ghettoized in the church and isolating the church from the world, which is the risk of the enculturation approach to Christian education.

In addition, Sherrill emphasized teaching Christian symbols and concepts as crucial for communicating the answers of Christianity. By helping persons become more familiar with the biblical drama and its symbols, Christian education helps persons to see the unique contributions of Christianity in relation to the transformation of the self and the community. In this way Sherrill's approach educates persons in theological concepts and Christian

symbols in ways that the shared-praxis approach does not do. By helping persons to become more familiar with the theological concepts and symbols of Christianity, Sherrill's approach assists persons in being able to understand the meaning of Christianity and to nurture their ongoing relationship with God.

CHAPTER 5

Developing a Correlational Grid to Guide Education for Personal Encounter

A guiding concern of this dissertation is the need for teaching the theological resources of Christianity as crucial to the encouragement of Christian identity. Persons must know something about Christianity and about Christian faith if they are to have faith in Christ. The vocabulary, symbols and theology of Christianity offer a means of communicating the "what" of Christianity.

If persons are meaningfully to engage the message of Christianity, the answer of Christianity must be communicated in terms of the questions it answers. That is, there must be a dynamic relevance between the framework of Christianity, the encounter of faith experience and the human predicament which calls for something more than human existence from within itself can provide. Primarily, we are in the realm of human meaning when we speak of relevance and power of transcendence to assist in effecting the power of meaning. Lewis Sherrill's philosophy of Christian education utilized the method of correlation to do just this. Bringing the gospel of redemption thorough faith in Christ into relationship with the tri-partite predicament of guilt, anxiety and hostility, Sherrill highlighted the meaning and relevance of the Christian view of redemption for the existential situation of felt personal anxiety in the mid twentieth century.

Sherrill suggested in a similar way that the great themes of redemption in the Bible be presented in a correlational structure with the human predicament to which they present an answer. While working with the correlation between predicament and theme, Sherrill had in mind the healing and nurturing personal I-Thou relationship as the central aim of

Christian education. The mutuality of need and the meeting of the need in God's self disclosure, points toward the meeting of "my" need by God whose presence meets that need and transforms both it and "me" in the process. Sherrill's emphasis on the correspondence between God's Self disclosure and human selves underscores the personal dimensions of Christianity and defines that task of Christian education as preparation for personal encounter.

Sherrill recognized that examination of the symbols and images which express the correlations that "meet in encounter" deepen the correlation so that two-way communication rather than one-way communication is possible. Sherrill focused the biblical symbols of encounter toward deepening personal experience and knowledge of those symbols for biblical faith.

Sherrill's correlational method suggests that teachers of Christianity must keep in mind the relevance of Biblical theology for lived Christian faith. Sherrill clearly points us in the right direction of such theologically integrating education: correlating predicament and theme, and deepening biblical consciousness through symbols of encounter. In renewing a correlational approach to Christian education along these lines, an appreciation and analysis of the story, symbols and experience of both the human situation and the answers of Christianity are needed.

In this chapter Emil Brunner joins Sherrill and Tillich as a third key figure for informing a correlational approach to Christian education that emphasizes personal encounter. Brunner, like Sherrill, emphasized the interpersonal relational nature of God's self disclosure. As we have seen in Sherrill's work, the divine-human encounter between selves lies at the heart of Christian identity. Brunner's work on truth as personal encounter

supports and deepens the I-Thou emphasis in Sherrill.¹ Brunner's insights on personal divine-human encounter as truth supports the relational emphasis of Sherrill's work. Brunner's interpretive work on the biblical concepts of faith, hope, and love, holds promise for furthering the implications of Sherrill's correspondence approach for Christian education.

Drawing on Brunner's thought on truth as encounter, in this chapter I will extend Sherrill's concern for education for encounter by developing a correlational "grid" to assist teachers of Christianity in engaging students with themes and symbols of encounter. The aim of the correlational grid is to put the questions of the human predicament and the answers of Christianity into dynamic relationship such that the personal correspondence of divine-human encounter may be shown and the experience of such transformative meeting may be encouraged. The grid emphasizes both the correlation between existential and biblical themes, and the interpersonal nature of encounter of faith. Before moving to an examination of the correlating categories of the grid, let us look more closely at the deeper correspondence which is at work behind the more visible correlations of predicament and theme.

Personal Correspondence as Liberating Truth

Emil Brunner's discussion of personal correspondence is especially helpful in clarifying the nature of the Christian message as the answer to the question of existence. Brunner, like Tillich, saw the human situation in terms of

¹ It has been cited that Sherrill did not depend on Brunner's work for the development of his own thought. But, the similarities are to be noted. Such congeniality between these two thinkers assists in developing the correlational approach presented here. See Maureen Mary Murphy, "The Contribution of the Psychological Approach of Lewis J. Sherrill to the Twentieth Century Religious Scene" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1973), 128.

human estrangement, exemplified in the object-subject antithesis.² Brunner describes Christian faith as overcoming the object-subject antithesis through the transformation of the antithesis into the cohering relationship between subject-subject. That is, Christianity is about the experience of relatedness which overcomes estrangement through personal relatedness with God. This is not so different from the relatedness between persons. In fact as Brunner said it, faith is a relationship whose "sole analogy is in the encounter between human beings, the meeting of persons with person."³ Sherrill's emphasis on the relational nature of Christianity has already been examined. Brunner's relational emphasis is compatible with Sherrill's appreciation of the personal element in Christianity. Both would agree that it is the I-Thou relationship that constitutes Christian meaning and serves as the basis of Christian identity. The personal description of Christianity is analogical though, as Christian faith is about being in relationship with God who is not only personal, but is also unconditioned and eternal. In this way the faith relationship fulfills a need in persons for a transcending relationship with another that is life giving.⁴

Working to understand the integrity of Christian truth in an era fraught with conflicts between religion and science, Brunner differentiated the truth

² Though it should be noted that Tillich moves in a more analytical, less personal direction in his development of the antithesis and its resolution.

³ Emil Brunner, Truth as Encounter: A New Edition, Much Enlarged, of "The Divine-Human Encounter" (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), 114.

⁴ For a discussion of the important psychological benefits of the faith relationship to meet human needs for ultimacy, see Victor Frankl's book Man's Search for Meaning and James Loder's book The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

of faith from objective truth which stands outside any relationship with one's self. While objective truth plays a certain role in Christianity, he acknowledged that the kind of truth which the Bible is centrally concerned is personal, relational truth. Brunner also differentiated Christian truth from subjective truth, which resides wholly within an individual. Following the language of Martin Buber, Brunner characterized the relationship of faith as subject-subject; as I-Thou.⁵

Emphasizing the faith relationship of the person toward God, the I-Thou relationship indicates that God addresses persons in personal correspondence. Brunner insisted that persons do not think their way into God's presence and thereby embrace God as "possession."⁶ Rather God's presence is graciously offered and persons may personally embrace it, or they may objectively miss it. Objective, or possessing knowledge based within the object-subject antithesis may be enriching, it simply is not saving. That is it doesn't touch the core of the personality--the "I" to which the "Thou" is trying to speak. Faith on the other hand, reverses this.⁷ Faith is that relationship which puts persons into relationship with God and recognizes the dependence of human beings upon God. Brunner describes faith as "the radical overcoming of the I-solitariness" through "unconditional fellowship."⁸

⁵ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 24.

⁶ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 115.

⁷ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 116.

⁸ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 117.

Brunner explains that persons find meaning in God's personal correspondence, they claim a new "ruling principle"⁹ for their lives. No longer estranged from the ground of being, persons live toward God as personal Thou and find the "monologue"¹⁰ of estrangement overcome. Life is lived out in the spirit of fellowship with God.

The basic answer of the Christian message to the human predicament is the presence of God which comes as gift from God's own self. The power of God's presence is effected in human beings as lordship, or to use Tillich's less patriarchal term, ultimate concern. Persons find meaning in life in spite of death and the spiritual and moral threats it presents, through the I-Thou relationship. This I-Thou relationship symbolizes life as the gift of God, and the meaning of life experienced as the graceful response of knowing that God is present to humanity in love. In the I-Thou relationship, persons find a "ruling principle" for their lives which is grounded not in possessions, be they material or mental, but in authentic selfhood, known and released by the presence and love of God. This relationship has the potential to release fresh energy for creative expression which characterizes love. Brunner's understanding of truth as encounter liberates Christian education from a too literalistic or objective approach to truth, and from a too opinion oriented, subjective bent, to a more religiously useful understanding of truth.

Faith in Christ as Faith in the Presence of God

The biblical tradition recognizes the presence of God with the world and with people through retelling experiences of the I-Thou relationship in the events of history and in the events of the inner lives of persons and

⁹ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 117.

¹⁰ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 117.

communities. The Christian witness extends the expression of the I-Thou relationship between God and humanity. It draws upon the already personal correspondence of God in revelation pointed to in the literature of the Hebrews and adds to it the manifestation of God incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth understood and proclaimed as Jesus the Christ. In the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God meets humanity. Through Jesus Christ the presence of God was given a most personal face. Persons became engaged in the spirit of God's presence through the events of Jesus ministry, particularly the ministries of preaching, teaching and healing. The events of his passion, death, resurrection, and his promised return further revealed the I-Thou relationship between God and humanity, but more uniquely, implied a new view of the potential of the I-Thou relationship for liberating human beings. That is, Christ points us to overcoming the threats of death, through the powers of life and redeems existence for creative expression. Faith in Christ is faith in the presence of God, which transforms human estrangement into human wholeness.

In Brunner's thought we see how Jesus Christ reveals God's presence to the human situation. Brunner points out that biblical views of Jesus point to the power of God's presence to redeem the past, the present and the future: "Jesus Christ did not come merely to come, but he came to redeem."¹¹ The meaning of God's presence is not found in a disassociated, objective presence. Rather God's presence is the power of being present in the activity of creation, redemption and new creation. Jesus Christ plays a pivotal role in the Christian understanding of the power of God's presence. As has been pointed out, the active power of God's presence expressed in the I-Thou relationship

¹¹ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 155.

has often been overlooked in favor of pursuing a too objective or too subjective understanding of the truth of Christ.¹² Rather than capitulate to notions of truth which detract from the biblical understanding of truth, communication of the Christian message should focus on the correspondence relationship which activates and engages the power of God's presence. The New Testament offers a view of Jesus that shows the power of God's presence through his life, ministry, death and resurrection. Brunner has offered a significant interpretation of these events as the active presence of God with humanity in his brief little book Faith, Hope and Love. Let us turn to this interpretation as preparatory for understanding the correlational grid I have developed and present later in this chapter.

Faith, Hope and Love

In Faith, Hope and Love Brunner looks at faith, hope and love as three interconnected, sometimes competing, sometimes supporting themes of the Christian answer.¹³ They are not to be understood as virtues, but rather as "the criterion of true Christianity."¹⁴ Given that faith, hope and love define Christian existence, Brunner sets out to articulate their meaning and interrelationship as "the totality of what it means to be a Christian."¹⁵ Brunner brings the totality of faith, hope and love into corresponding

¹² Brunner noted the loss that came in the history of Christianity in this regard when the church "bogged" down in its defense of the unity between God and humanity in Jesus Christ, losing sight of the activity of God's power which is the power of revelation and redemption. See Truth as Encounter, 155-56.

¹³ Emil Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 12.

¹⁴ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 12.

¹⁵ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 12.

relationship with the totality of human existence expressed by the three dimensions of time: past, present and future. Human beings live in the past by memory, in the future by expectation and in the present when they are "present" to it.¹⁶ This threefold totality of time recognizes how time both characterizes and influences what it is to be human. No one lives meaningfully without some active relationship with the past, present and future. In fact it is these three types of existence which give human beings their tragic, comic and romantic character. That is, time give life its texture.

Brunner raises the question about the relationship of Christianity to this totality of existence in time. How is it that "our relation to Jesus Christ affects our living in the past, present and future?"¹⁷ The New Testament answer is that "we live in the past by faith, we live in the future by hope, we live in the present by love."¹⁸ Each of these expressions of Christian existence, faith hope and love, address the totality of existence in time defined by past, present and future. With these categories of the Christian answer to the question raised by human predicament in mind, let us return to the central concern of this dissertation—developing a correlational approach to Christian education which prepares persons for encounter. The correlational grid developed here may assist Christian educators in visualizing and illuminating the basic correlation of the questions of the human predicament and the answers of Christianity. In addition, this grid offers a method for organizing Christian education. It is the contention here that by developing a correlational grid between predicament and theme, not only of the biblical

¹⁶ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 13.

¹⁷ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 13.

¹⁸ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 13.

materials, but also of contemporary experiences of estrangement and redemption, particularly as it is expressed in culture, Christian education can more effectively help persons to understand and claim the personally transforming meaning of Christianity.

The Correlational Grid

In Chapter 3 we saw how Tillich emphasized the importance of including contemporary experience in the processes of communicating Christian meaning. Emphasizing the existential predicament of estrangement and the many ways it can be seen in personal and communal experiences of anxiety and in cultural symbols, Tillich showed how existential analysis of cultural patterns and symbols can deepen our understanding of the situation. Inclusion of the situation helps to create common ground between the Christian message and the contemporary situation which is necessary for effectively communicating Christian meaning. Therefore, the grid developed here correlates the fundamental questions of the human predicament with the basic answers of the Christian message. The situation is represented in the questioning side of the grid by Tillich's types of anxiety (ontic, spiritual and moral), previously explored in Chapter 3. The questioning side of the grid is answered by three categories of the redemptive acts of Christ, faith, hope and love. The grid shows Jesus Christ as the central symbol and person through whom redemption comes. Jesus Christ as God's presence in the three dimensions of time, past, present and future, serves as the integrating medium for the themes presented in the grid. (See Figure 1.)

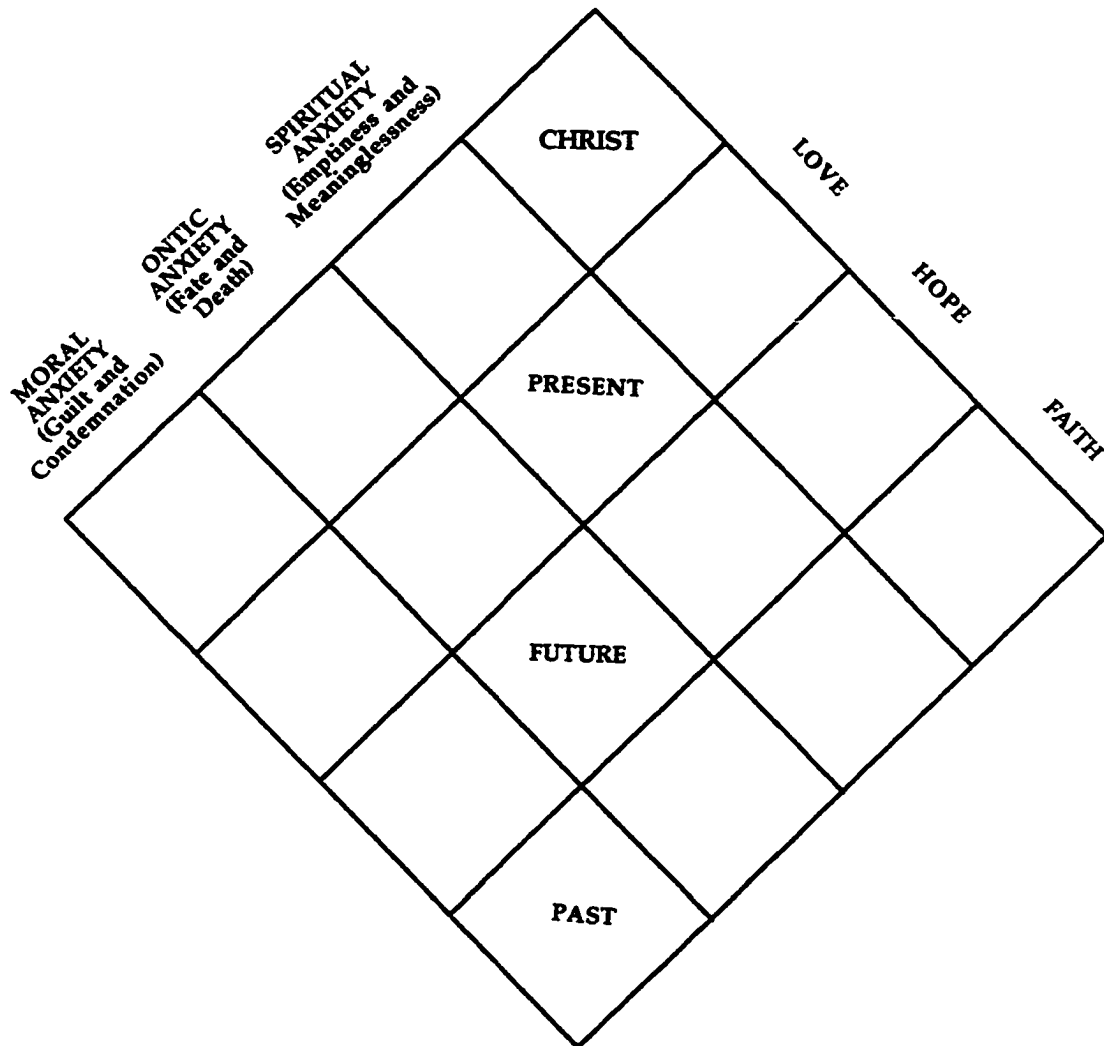


Figure 1
The Correlational Grid

The above grid represents the predicament of moral anxiety, understood as a predicament primarily of the past, and is correlated with faith in the historically past event of Jesus' death. The predicament of ontic anxiety is understood as a predicament primarily of the future and is correlated with hope in the future return of Christ as securing a vital future. The predicament of spiritual anxiety is understood as a predicament of the present and is correlated with love as the ever present expression of the spirit of Jesus' life of love.

Keeping with the concern for encounter, and for the transformation of the self that is made possible through it, this grid focuses on Jesus Christ as the central symbol and person through whom redemption comes. But, it also recognizes that it is not simply Jesus Christ as event which redeems, but the inflowing of Jesus Christ into life by means of human spirituality. That is, the human quality of faith in Christ is the wing upon which felt redemption in Christ comes. Therefore, the categories of faith, hope and love represent God's loving presence which is mediated in Jesus Christ and which brings faith, hope and love to life in persons' lives. The themes of faith, hope and love constitute the correlating answer to the predicament expressed by Tillich's types of anxiety.

Faith in Jesus Christ as the Incarnation of God in the Past,

Correlated with Moral Anxiety

Let us begin to explore the correlational grid by examining the correlation of Tillich's category of moral anxiety with Brunner's category of faith. Tillich's view of moral anxiety was put forth in chapter three. There we saw that moral anxiety, expressed as guilt and condemnation, is the anxiety over destiny. That is, human beings have potential for self-actualization.

Human beings have the potential to become who they were created to be.¹⁹ Moral being requires making choices, choices which are often ambiguous. There is often more than one "good" act and even the one "good" act may have less than good results in one way or another. In spite of the relativity and ambiguity involved in many decisions, persons are called to act responsibly. To greater and lesser degrees, the failure to fulfill one's life, however it is perceived, is the ground for an attitude of moral anxiety. Primarily grounded in past choices, moral anxiety looms as that from which one cannot escape. Tillich emphasized guilt and condemnation as the key categories of moral anxiety, emphasizing the self-reflective, judging capacities of persons. This might be updated today to include victimization (projected guilt) and shame, but the category remains vital. Whenever persons experience their complicity in wrong doing, or in living poorly, the anxiety of self rejection threatens their positive self-estimation with doubt and despair, thus solidifying a defensive posture toward oneself and others. Thus, moral anxiety cripples the self from actualization.

In the grid presented here, moral anxiety is correlated with faith as a quality which is primarily relevant to the past. Brunner suggests that this connection between faith and the past can be seen by recognizing that Christian meaning is related to past historical events. That is, Christianity is grounded in historical events or "facts." The person of Jesus Christ who lived a historical existence now in the past, is central to the Christian view of redemption. Jesus, as the historical incarnation of God, reveals God love and is a symbol for the redemption of humanity.²⁰ Jesus was a person in history.

¹⁹ Tillich, Courage to Be, 52.

²⁰ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 18.

Christianity is not grounded in speculation, but rather in the "fact" of God's presence in the history of Jesus Christ. God's loving presence was expressed in the life, ministry and death of this person, Jesus.

Brunner points out that while Christian faith is relevant to a historic event, it is not as historic event alone that give faith its meaning or relevance. The meaning and relevance of Christ is found from the point of view of personal faith.²¹ This means that while grounded in historic events, Christian faith in the revelation of God and the redemption of Jesus Christ is not faith in objects that stand outside of subjective experience as the historical events could be described. Christian faith is a particular view of those historical events of the past, a view that sees God's redeeming love present in them.

Brunner emphasizes the cross as the central event to which Christian faith is focused. While the term faith may be used in a variety of ways, faith in the cross draws attention to the centrality of Christ's suffering as the expression of God's love. It implies faith in a past event to redeem one's own life which has been shaped fundamentally by events of one's own moral past. What this means is that persons see their own past in light of the cross as redemptive love. Whether it is a need for forgiveness for, or a release from, the emotional grip of events of one's past, the cross "closes the gates of hell"²² and opens the way to a more meaningful present and hopeful future. The reality of the morally ambiguous world in which humans live and the reality that existence is yet defined in part by a moral quality, are both caught up in the cross of Christ which symbolizes the persevering love of God. Faith in

²¹ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 24.

²² Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 32.

the God of the cross is faith in one who accepts human finitude and whose acceptance redeems one's accumulating past. Guilt and shame relate to events past which prohibit full participation in the present and hope for the future. They circumvent the full potential of the present and future by linking one's current potential to a failed past.

Negative judgments of the self, experienced as guilt,²³ shame or condemnation, may cross past, present and future, but they are judgments in light of the power of the past upon our lives. Tillich notes how efforts to overcome guilt are expressed in the "moral rigor" of legalism and the "defiance of negative judgments" of anomism.²⁴ Moral anxiety, however expressed, comprises the moral situation of persons which binds them to the insecurity of anxiety driven lives. The life, ministry and death of Jesus shows how God sought to bring people out of a present lived wholly under the condemnation of the past. Faith in Christ is faith in one who fully accepts the finitude of the human situation and calls persons to live in a spirit of responsible acceptance of the limits to self-actualization.

Correlating the predicament of the past (moral anxiety), experienced as self-doubt, guilt, victimization, shame or condemnation, with faith in Jesus whose death holds redemptive meaning, persons encounter freedom from moral anxiety for moral expression. The grid points to the question of moral anxiety and correlates it with the answer of faith in the cross of Christ which expresses God's presence with human beings and God's acceptance of the world in spite of its moral failures. (See Figure 2.)

²³ Tillich, Courage to Be, 52.

²⁴ Tillich, Courage to Be, 53.

As person's correlate their experience of faith with their experiences of moral anxiety, they may begin to see the relevance of the cross for their lives. The cross is an integrating symbol for redemption from the past that helps people to live more freely and courageously into the present and future. As persons encounter their lives in terms of the themes and predicaments represented in the grid, they may be able to better see and name their reality in Christian terms. Drawn into the dynamics of guilt and condemnation, and those of a transcending faith, the significance of the cross for their lives may become more intelligible and meaningful.

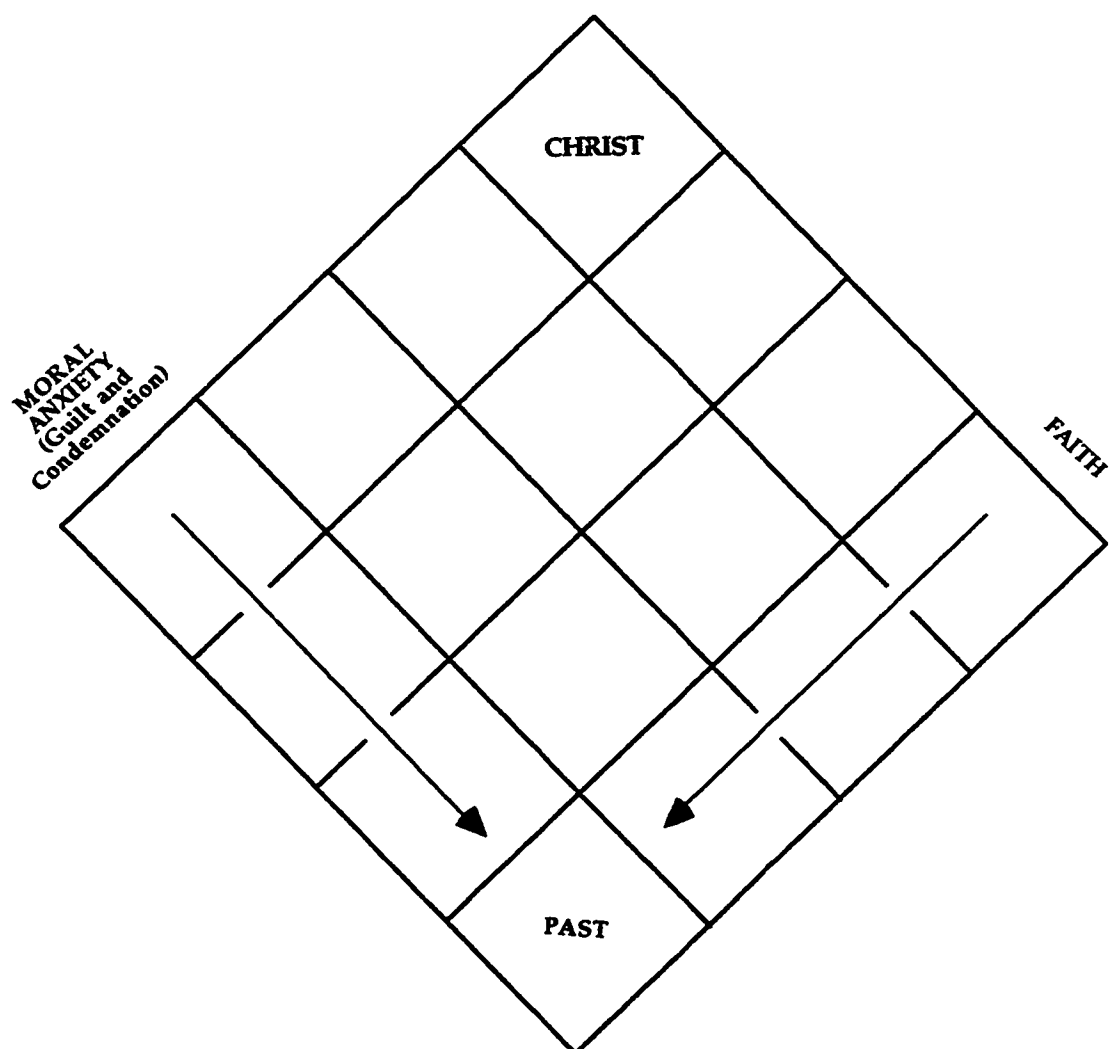


Figure 2

Hope in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and His
Promised Return as Anticipation of the Future,
Correlated with Ontic Anxiety

Now let us turn to the correlation of ontic anxiety and the Christian answer as it is expressed in Christian hope. Brunner includes hope in his description of the totality of human existence in time. Hope represents life understood in light of the future. Living in the future by means of expectation or anticipation makes up part of what it means to be human. Hope is a positive estimation of the expectation of life in the future. How is it that Christianity understands the experience of hope? Veering from the modernist view of hope in "progress"²⁵ Brunner explains that, in the New Testament view, Jesus Christ was "the expected One." The long looked for coming of God.²⁶ An inbreaking of the presence of God. Christ represents the hope and longing of the people and the coming of God's presence into their world. Christian hope is related to faith in Christ the cross, but as Brunner points out, Christian hope is grounded in the image of Christ as victor, risen as "Glorified One."²⁷ Christian hope is defined by Jesus' resurrection and his ongoing existence as "glorified." The promised return of Christ expresses hope for a future where all will be glorified with Christ.

Hope in Christ is connected with two things; one is a hope for God's continued presence through the power of God's love in this life and in this world, and God's loving presence in eternal life. Both of these hopes are the gift of God in grace. They transcend the human situation and yet include it.

²⁵ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 40.

²⁶ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 45.

²⁷ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 47.

Coming from beyond the situation itself, they work with the human need for a future that is good. Life cut off from God, the ground of eternal being, is limited in its possibilities. Death threatens self affirmation in the most basic way. It puts an end to being, and therefore, an end to one's future. Fate threatens vitality with unending suffering. It puts an end to creative living by imposing the inescapably contingent quality of being onto the self. When it comes to consciousness that one will biologically die, and that there seems to be a pre-set program that makes this the case, death and fate may rob persons of their life, creativity and versatility. Death and fate are cause for fundamental despair about the feasibility of the ongoingness of life and its possibilities for creative action and meaning. Christian hope addresses these related predicaments.

Brunner points out the importance of Christian hope for the betterment of the world by comparing it with non-Christian utopianism. "If man is so panic stricken that he thinks paradise must come within this earthly life, he is bound to take recourse to coercion and violence to produce it."²⁸ The answer of Christian hope is faith in the risen Christ as God's presence in the future and opens the way for freedom from the anxiety of fate and death. Hope enables the experience of freedom for the present in light of a good and glorious future. Certain confidence in God's loving presence manifested in the resurrection and promised future return of Christ overcomes the panic stirred up by death, enabling persons to live more peacefully in an existence dominated by love. It inspires them to work for a future present that will be characterized by love as well. The secure expectation of eternal life (however defined) overcomes the anxiety of doubt about the future marked by death.

²⁸ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 54.

"Even death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" is the Christian claim.

This brings us to the correlation of Christian hope with the ontological anxieties of fate and death. As we have seen, Tillich defined the human predicament as being under the threat of non-being. "The anxiety of death is the permanent horizon" of human existence and presents also the "relative threat of fate." The inescapable limit of life and the seeming unnecessary contingency which characterizes it by death is the question to which Christian hope is the answer. In the resurrection and promised return of Christ, God's loving presence overcomes all future events which would limit that love. Death is overcome in eternal life. The anxieties of fate and death are overcome with the expectation of healing and new life. The hope for life and eternal life is in part grounded in the historical events of Christ's life, ministry and death to free us from the past. It is also grounded in Jesus' resurrection and promised return, which show that death is not the final word. Life is greater than death. Christ's resurrection gave new power to his followers. They came to understand the possibilities life holds under the power of the resurrection. This is the answer of Christianity toward the question of the future. God's loving presence secures the future even as it secures the past. It secures it as a place which is open for life and the potential of life in ways not always experienced in the present. The hope for life in the future, symbolized by eternal life, transforms the possibilities of life in the present. The correlation of fate and death with hope for abundant and eternal life, known in the resurrection of Christ and his promised return, opens the way for a new attitude in the present. Christian hope claims that suffering and death are not the final word. Christ opens a door to life that no one can shut (Revelation 3:8 RSV). To live in hope is to see God present in

redeeming the future even as faith is to see God's presence redeeming the past. The correlational grid rightly includes the category of the future. (See Figure 3.)

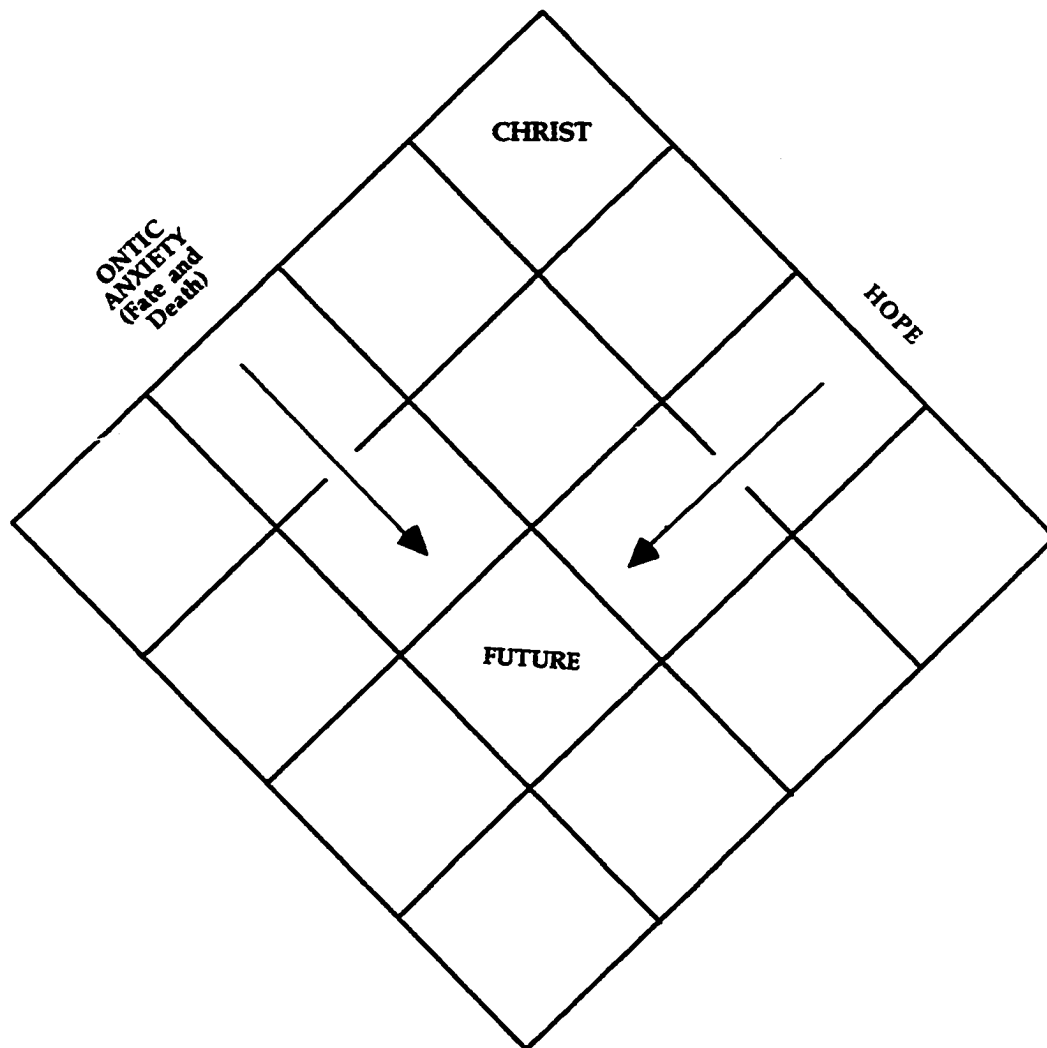


Figure 3

Love as the Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in the Self,

Correlated with Spiritual Anxiety

Brunner correlates love with present time. Brunner explains: "Faith has to do with the basis, the ground on which we stand. Hope is reaching out for something to come. Love is just being there and acting."²⁹ Love as being there and acting indicates the radically present character of love. Encounter is possible only through present time. The present becomes the sacramental moment where God and persons meet. The human activity of love is a living response in the present.

Brunner points out that often "we are not really present because our heart is caught, as it were, both in the past and in the future."³⁰ The past entangles the self in remorse. The future entangles the self in protective worry over what will or will not happen. Brunner raises the question as to how Christ changes the entanglement with the past and future that eclipses the present.³¹ The answer lies in Christ's power to free the present by securing eternal life as the ground of the future. In this way we are given the present through which love may be both received and expressed. Very simply "to become a loving heart instead of a worried, self centered heart means to become 'present.'" The man who receives Christ in faith receives presence, because God's love is presence."³²

God's love, defined as "presence," is a particular kind of presence and a particular kind of love. Brunner calls it unmotivated love, or Agape. Agape

²⁹ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 61.

³⁰ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 71.

³¹ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 73.

³² Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 74.

"is not being attracted or filled by the value of the beloved, but it is "a 'going out to,' a giving, not a getting, of value. It is not comparable to a vacuum effect, a suction, but rather like a spring gushing forth."³³ Christ, whose identity lies with God, expresses the loving presence which comes from beyond temporality, that is, from eternal being. This presence is loving and frees persons from the tyrannies of past and future by making the present moment available for love.

Returning to the correlational scheme of the grid, love is the answer to the question of spiritual anxiety. Spiritual anxiety indicates a crisis of meaning, be it expressed in the relative threat of emptiness or the absolute threat of meaninglessness. Tillich points out that "the anxiety of meaninglessness is anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern."³⁴ Emptiness and meaninglessness indicate a loss of spirit and threaten spiritual self affirmation. As life loses its contents, it loses its meaning. Devoid of participation which engages the self, life is empty. The loneliness of isolation, the loss of a loved one, and the purposelessness of one's job are examples of how self-affirmation can be eclipsed by emptiness. The despair of social injustice, the lack of connection between one's efforts and the outcome of a situation, and the lack of recognition of one's contributions to others are examples of how meaningful living and a sense of value may be threatened by spiritual anxiety. The vitality of living may be obliterated by a sense of meaninglessness. When persons are cut off from creative participation, they are cut off from the present moment of love.

³³ Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 64.

³⁴ Tillich, Courage to Be, 47.

Estrangement from God as the ground of love causes disorientation as well, and does so at the deepest level. Separated from God's presence, persons suffer disorientation and an outright loss of center. The structures of culture, including religion, may assist in orienting persons, but the structures they offer will always be limited by the type and spirit of human interaction found in them. It is through the recognition of the self by another person whose love springs forth from eternal being that emptiness and meaninglessness can be overcome. The providential presence of God known in the experience of the Hebrews and known in the experience of those whose lives were made whole by the touch of Christ, is the answer to the question of spiritual anxiety. God's loving presence which redeems the past and the future for the present expression of love overcomes the anxiety of spiritual death known in emptiness and meaninglessness.

Emptiness and meaninglessness, then, are problems of the present. People may attempt to fill up their emptiness with busyness, or may avoid their sense of meaninglessness by taking on a defensive attitude, for example, cynicism. Whether the roots of emptiness and meaninglessness are found in events of the past, present or anticipated future, it is the present moment that is robbed of its creative expression when emptiness and meaninglessness dominate one's experience. When the self is met by God in personal encounter, the present is opened to greater expression of love. As persons know that God is with them, some of the burden of living is relieved and can be replaced with the gift of power. The self is affirmed and strengthened, liberated to love and serve others in healthy ways. The correlation between spiritual anxiety and love is represented in the grid, and completes the representation of the totality of existence in time and in relation to the presence of God in Jesus Christ. (See Figure 4.)

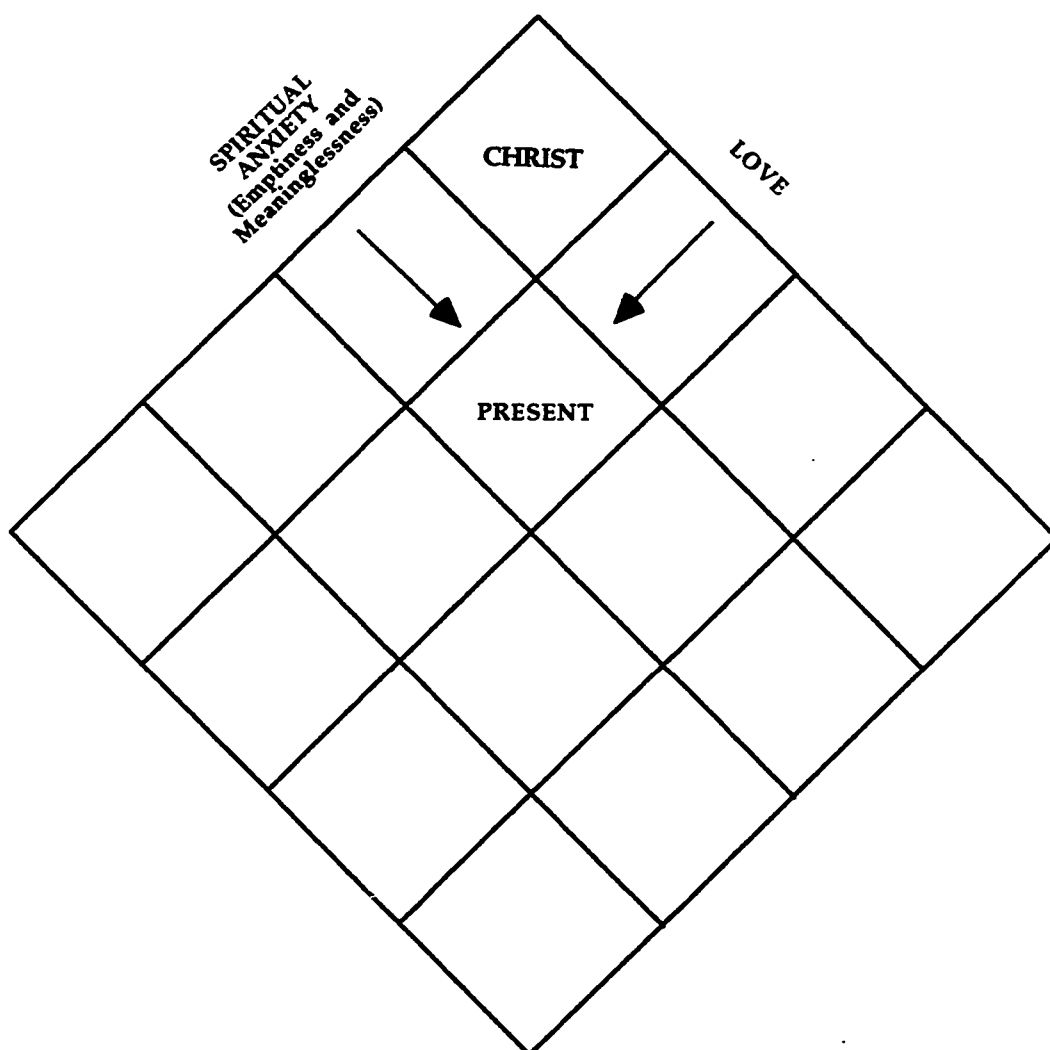


Figure 4

Interrelationships within the Grid

Even as Tillich's three types of anxiety are interrelated and work with each other to ward off or to express despair, so the Christian trio of faith, hope and love are interrelated. Both faith and hope are grounded in the love of God through which persons become equipped to love others more truly. The love of God is the unconditioned eternal presence of God to which faith and hope point. The answer of Christianity to the predicament of estrangement expressed in the human experience of anxiety is the love of God manifest in Jesus Christ made present to us through faith, through hope and through love. In this way the threats of fate and death are overcome through the power of hope, guilt and condemnation through the power of faith, and emptiness and meaninglessness through the power of love.

These key themes which describe Christian existence are well illustrated in the ritual of the Lord's Supper.³⁵ Encountering oneself before God in relation to one's past, present and future guide the flow of this ritual. The call to repentance and confession indicate a relationship with the past. The moments of receiving the elements of the Lord's Supper celebrate the present moment as a moment where one meets the love of God in Christ. The dismissal calls persons to go forth into the future, expectant that God's presence will be in the future, even as God has been met in the present moments of communion. The ritual of the Lord's Supper offers a helpful image of the spirit of the correlational grid.

All three correlations of the grid express important qualities of the whole of Christian existence, even as all three movements of the ritual of the Lord's

³⁵ See "The Service of Word and Table I, II, III, IV" in The United Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989).

Supper work together to support and affirm the relationship between persons and God. While persons may find themselves struggling with one particular type of anxiety, the other types are not far away. Likewise, as one finds the answer expressed in one of the categories on the answering side of the grid, the other categories are not far from sight. All of the categories of the grid are interrelated. As persons encounter their lives by exploring of one of the correlations, then their lives as a whole are touched with God's presence.

I have tried to show through this grid that Christianity is cosmic in its representation of the totality of the human experience of time past, present and future. I have also emphasized that Christianity is personal in that faith, hope and love have to do with what it means to feel connected with the reality of one's own life and with the lives of others. God's presence manifest through Jesus Christ as mediator in the grid, further recognizes the personal dimension in Christianity. Christianity offers answers to the existential questions of life by making God's presence available to persons. These answers hold great potential for strengthening human vitality, meaning and sense of destiny.

It must be acknowledged that the risk of developing and utilizing a grid like the one I have developed here, is that it may over-simplify human anxiety and suffering, and likewise, over-simplify the meaning of faith, hope and love, and the power of God's presence symbolized in Jesus Christ. Not only is it false to say that the anxiety of estrangement can be formulated only as the anxieties presented in the grid, it is equally false to deny other types of the Christian answer. While the categories of the grid are sufficiently broad to encompass many types of human experience, it is not meant to exclude other issues and types of experience. Human suffering and human redemption are more complex than the grid indicates. The interrelationship between one's

experiences of the past, present and future is likely to be a much tighter relationship than can be expressed in a graphic representation. The purpose of the grid is not to stereotype existence into discrete categories which unnecessarily fragment the many qualities found within the human personality. Such stereotyping would only trivialize the predicament of human existence and the power of God's presence to transform it.

Rather than stereotype human and Christian existence, this correlation between the question of the human predicament and the answer of Christianity paints in bold strokes the kinds of questions and the kinds of answers which are to guide the work of Christian education. Christian education must be in touch with what makes it meaningful and powerful in people's lives if it is to assist in communicating the meaning and power of Christianity. The correlational grid developed here is designed to illuminate the meaning and power of Christianity. The themes presented provide teachers of Christianity a scheme by which to organize the central themes of the Christian message through correlating them with the human situation. Cultivation of each category in its relationships with the other categories can help persons to become more familiar and confident of the meaning of Christianity and its meaning for their lives and the world. With this in mind let us examine more closely the usefulness of the correlational grid for assisting Christian educators in their tasks.

The Correlational Grid and the Christian Educator

The import of the correlational grid for education for personal encounter is twofold. First, it informs the stance of the Christian educator. Second, it offers a method to guide the work of education as preparation for encounter.

More than any other single thing, the stance of the Christian educator will influence the content, style and method of educational ministry. By speaking

of stance, I offer a metaphor to describe how the Christian educator locates him or herself in relation to their work. Stance conjures up the literal image of how one stands; posture, direction and footing. It also evokes the spirit or energy with which one stands; animation. As a metaphor, stance offers us a means of talking about the Christian educator's self understanding and view of the task of Christian education.

Christian educators make many decisions in their work. Some are overt, like choosing a location to meet, a subject to study and a method of presentation and participation. Many are covert, maybe even unconscious, but equally influential. Such is the case with the many details of how one "comes across" in the educational setting. What shall teachers acknowledge in themselves and others in the course of their time together with their classes? When will they take more time to explore a point and when will they push on to other material, or seek to create a different a mood by introducing some new component into the discussion? How will teachers develop a thread that holds the multiplicity of behaviors and themes that surface in an educational event such that it honors the intent of the event? All of these decisions, and many more, are made in large degree from the stance once takes in relationship to the enterprise of Christian education.

We saw in Chapter 2 how John Westerhoff developed an enculturation approach to Christian education and how Thomas Groome formalized natural dialogical communication into the shared-praxis approach. Each in their own way took a theological and educational stance which has indelibly shaped their work. Westerhoff's stance views Christian education as enculturation aimed at teaching persons the meaning of Christianity through incorporation into the community that defines itself by Christian meaning and the traditions that express it. This stance influences how Christian

educators who adopt it will go about their work. Underlying the enculturation approach is a bias toward what I have called the answers of Christianity. Enculturation engages persons with the positive contributions of the Christian community for formation of the individual and the community. Hence, Westerhoff critiques the schooling model of Christian education as standing somewhat outside the life of the church and proposes that educators think in terms of the power of the life of a community as a whole to shape Christians with particular emphasis on the educational possibilities of worship, liturgy and fellowship.

Groome's stance on the other hand, reflects his hermeneutical and liberationist concerns. His posture seeks out the critical element that will potentially engage students with their own reality and the social construction of their cultural context and religious heritage. Drawing heavily on the metaphor of the reign of God, shared-praxis is theologically broad based and focuses on social action (including educational process) as the type of answer it seeks to embrace. Such an answer downplays the role of belief as formative for faith. Groome's questioning stance naturally influences the style with which shared-praxis is implemented. Less rigid than authoritarian approaches to education, Groome's stance is likely to pick up on those elements which reveal students reality in their social context and affirming their agency in relation to it. It will recognize those ideas and actions which will lead students into critical thinking and decisive action.

The correlational grid I have developed likewise represents a particular stance toward Christian education and in doing so lends support to Christian educators who embrace similar commitments and concerns. Attempting to overcome the somewhat disintegrating effects of enculturation and shared-praxis, where the questions of existence and the answers of the Christian

message are split off from each other, the correlational grid integrates the questions with the answers. Underlying the correlational grid is the concern to develop students' understanding of the Christian message as it offers itself as answering the questions inherent in human existence. There is an apologetic quality involved in the grid which is driven by the meaning of the Christian message itself and also by the theological situation in which the church currently finds itself. As Tillich pointed out in the introduction to his Systematic Theology, theology is itself apologetic in nature and has served the church over the centuries in this way. It defends the meaning of Christianity through showing the relevance of the gospel to the human situation.

The correlational grid supports the apologetic work of Christian education. By acknowledging the link between belief and faith, and that belief must make sense, I designed the grid to connect Christian theology with lived experience. It represents how life in Jesus Christ is a life of redemption and wholeness. It represents that life involves the possibilities and realities of suffering and joy, responsibility and freedom, and death as well as life. The presence of God in Jesus Christ offers the personal solidarity that persons need in their lives. God's presence in Jesus Christ also affirms that there is more than what present experience reveals. The Christian message affirms the transcendence of human finitude and participation in that transcendence through faith, hope and love. The apologetic stance represented in the correlational grid is one where the role of belief and the theology that supports belief are seen as important to the Christian life. The correlational grid, then, emphasizes the Christian educator's role as Christian apologist. The correlational grid reflects an apologetic stance and lends visual and conceptual support for this important role of Christian educators.

The correlational grid also informs the stance of the Christian educator as being one that facilitates two-way communication aimed at personal encounter. The apologetic stance of the Christian educator is tempered by personal concern for students and by honor for the uniqueness of each person's experience. Education is preparation for encounter and does not attempt to force encounter. The correlational grid supports two-way communication firstly in its recognition of the personal involvement of God with humanity in Jesus Christ and also in its correlational dynamic that makes themes of the human predicament (anxiety) and of Christianity (faith, hope and love) relevant to each other. Jesus Christ symbolically claims persons' lives in the totality of their past, present and future by reconciling the anxiety of existence through faith, hope and love. He becomes the symbol for two-way communication between God and humanity.

Likewise, correlation in Jesus Christ as redeemer of the past, present and future, located at the center of the grid, reminds Christian educators of both the centrality of God's presence to work redemption. It also reminds them that redemption is relevant to the totality of persons' lives in their need for affirmation and actualization. Not only does God's presence in Jesus Christ, placed at the center of the grid, affirm the two-way communication involved in the relationship between God and human beings. The correlational design of the grid also affirms the dialogical stance of the Christian educator. Following the correlational design of the grid, the Christian educator seeks to engage students through the flow of communication made possible by the questioning and answering approach. The more closely the questions and answers connect in the mind and experience of the student, the more likely it is that they will encounter the meaning of Christianity. The correlational grid thus supports the role of Christian educators as facilitators and teachers

of two-way communication and affirms their bias for education as preparation for personal encounter.

Closely linked to the stance of the Christian educator, the correlational grid also offers a method by which to organize the work of Christian education. As has already been affirmed in this paper, Christian education is fundamentally preparation for encounter. The aim is to familiarize persons with the dynamics, symbols and drama of Christianity in such a way that persons will be able to enter into their own relationship with God. Such an approach is relational as well as correlational in its method. Person to person engagement through interpersonal relationships and dialogical conversation, is part of this method which is aimed at personal encounter. As such, whether the dialogue is between the teacher and students, pastor and parishioners, or among persons in a community, two-way communication is to be promoted. As persons reveal themselves to each other, they may become more open to themselves and to their experiences, beliefs and commitments. By attempting to correlate the human predicament in their own lives and in the culture around them with the Christian message, persons may find themselves opening their lives in ways that make personal encounter with each other and with God possible. While the grid does not name the specifics of how two-way communication comes about, it does recognize through its correlational design and through the symbolic presence of God in Jesus Christ, that interpersonal relationship and dialogue are the methods indicated in the grid. The method implied by the correlational grid is relational and affirms the necessity of relationship for the formation, reformation and transformation of human beings.

The method of the correlational grid is also, of course, correlational. It brings themes into relationship with each other according to the question and

answer scheme. The way educators may make use of the correlational dynamic between themes represented in the grid is to develop assignments and educational activities which are inspired by it. While there are a number of ways this might be done, education in symbols and drama may illuminate and illustrate the categories of the grid, thus becoming the basic tools for educating persons in the content of Christianity through the dynamics of the grid. Recognizing the spirit of Christianity as being symbolized in the life, ministry, death, resurrection and promised return of Jesus Christ and the dynamic symbols it has to carry the messages of creation (life), redemption (cross) and new creation (resurrection and return), similar cultural and biblical symbols of encounter may be found to illuminate them. For example, a study of acts of love in the Bible and how they transform persons from ignorance and suffering to new life would illustrate the category of the grid that correlates emptiness and meaninglessness with love. Certainly the ministry of Jesus could be studied in this way, highlighting his acts of healing hurting people. But, the grid allows other stories and symbols to be seen in their power to express God's presence as well. Biblical passages to be explored in this way could include Israel's captivity in Egypt, the Exodus and the giving of the Law; the undying love of the prophets for God and for Israel; the love of the early Christian church that expressed itself in material generosity thus overcoming the emptiness of non-generosity. Non-biblical literature and the arts hold special promise for engaging persons with the theologically transformative content of the grid through story, drama and symbols. This will be explored in the next chapter and will serve as the stepping off point of the dissertation to play with the possibilities of education for Christian encounter utilizing the method of the correlational grid.

Another way the grid may assist educators methodologically is in engaging students with the stories and symbols of their own lives. Autobiographical exploration can be a helpful means for engaging persons with the dynamics of Christianity through the support of the correlational grid. While pastoral care and counseling are the traditional context to explore the autobiographical events (particularly the anxieties) of one's life, Christian education may also be an appropriate place to assist people in examining their personal experiences in relationship to the Christian message. Group education, particularly small group education, designed to at once educate about and also to facilitate the personal encounter of faith may help people to engage their lives with the Christian message in ways that don't happen in a worship service, which are often passive in design, or in educational events aimed at consciousness raising or simple exposure to symbols and ideas. Inviting persons to share their personal stories in ways that reveal their experience of the questions of the human predicament and the answers of the Christian message, along the pattern of the grid may help them to get in touch with the theological categories and meaning of Christianity. Class assignments might involve writing, telling about or drawing pictures that explore the ways the participants have experienced emptiness in their lives. By allowing the particulars of those experiences to surface in the symbols of language or of art, persons may become more personally involved in the categories represented in the grid. Sensitive, yet probing, questions on the part of the teacher and fellow participants may help to deepen the experiences shared, by asking the students to share their stories more fully.

A similar activity could be used to open up the answering side of the grid, with students exploring their experiences of faith, hope or love. By recognizing the qualities of those experiences, persons may begin to affirm the

answers of Christianity found in their own experiences by naming them as such. The educator is encouraged to incorporate into such explorations of the answers or the questions raised by the grid, ways in which Christ stands at the center of the questioning and answering qualities of life. This might be done by infiltrating comments connecting Christ to their story into the dialogue, through prayer which recognizes God's presence in Christ, or through introducing Christ into the classroom environment through art depicting Christ. There are a variety of possibilities here. No matter which theme of the grid is explored, its relationship to the other parts of the grid is to be included in the educational event as a whole. This means that ultimately, the questioning side of the grid will not be explored in isolation from the answering side of the grid, and visa versa. The totality of existence symbolized by Christ is to be affirmed throughout. The spirit of the grid as a whole is to be incorporated into the method of presentation in educational events.

Whatever specific program of Christian education is designed, the emphasis proposed here is that of making the content of Christianity relevant to the questions for which it is the answer. To explore the presence of God in Jesus Christ, is to raise up and explore human existence. To explore the pain, suffering and emptiness that can be found in life, is to call forth their resolution in light of the love of God in Jesus Christ. To explore experiences of guilt, shame, self-rejection or condemnation is to awaken awareness of Christ on the cross and faith as a means of resolution to these events grounded in the past. To explore fears of future suffering, disappointment, loss or death, is to draw attention to the experience of Christ's resurrection and to the implications of his promised return for a hopeful present and future. As persons are educated into these dynamics, they can become more

aware of how Christianity makes a contribution to human existence on the side of freedom and vitality. In doing so, persons may or may not choose to be present to the ways God would encounter them in their lives and in their world. This is the risk of correlational method aimed at personal encounter. There are no guarantees offered here. What is offered is a stance and a method which can undergird and guide Christian educators to assist persons in getting the information they need, in the context of human relationships, so they may enter more fully into the journey of the Christian life. When given an adequate opportunity many people will ask "What is the meaning of Christianity, of suffering, of life?" The correlational grid takes those questions seriously and incorporates them into the enterprise of Christian education.

Chapter 6

Using Literature and the Arts in Education for Personal Encounter

The correlational grid presented in the previous chapter is representative of the encounter approach proposed in this dissertation. This approach can support education for Christian identity – the self affirmation made possible through the encounter with God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Christ, identified with the eternal presence of God and with transcendence over the threat of death, is that presence who goes with human beings to work healing and redemption. As one who was (past), who is (present) and who is to come (future), Christ is the eternal personal presence which brings redemption. Through Christ's presence in these three spheres of time, the totality of faith, hope and love become the living criteria which define Christian existence. As persons encounter Christ, they are empowered to more fully express faith, hope and love in their own lives.

In the previous chapter I put forth that the correlational grid may be of help in organizing the work of education for Christian identity. Recognizing the central role of personal encounter with God for fostering Christian identity, the grid presents key themes in a questioning and answering scheme. As the dynamic relationships between the themes of the grid are explored, persons may more readily recognize the patterns of estrangement in their lives and in the culture around them. Likewise, persons may also see more clearly symbols of God's transforming presence in their lives and in the world about them. The correlational design of the grid shows both the questioning side of existence and the answering side of the message of Christianity. When Christian educators draw students into exploration of the human predicament as part of what it is to communicate the meaning of

Christianity, the answer may become more relevant to their experience of life and of the world. By making Christianity more relevant to lived experience, Christian education works to prevent the ghettoization of the Christian message to the church. Since the answer of Christ is at the center of the grid, the answer is fully integrated into the correlation and cannot be obscured.

With these basic values of the correlational grid in mind, we will now explore how the grid might be used in action. The value of the grid for Christian educators has already been examined. Its relevance to the Christian educator's stance and method was noted. Bible study and autobiography were given as examples as to how the grid may be used methodologically to educate persons into the lived meaning of Christianity. The focus of this chapter will be on using cultural sources in Christian education. I will show ways that the grid may be used to inform how literature and the arts can be viewed to enhance their use in Christian education.

In Chapter 3 I recognized Tillich's way of utilizing social analysis and the arts to express the questions of existence and, thereby, bring the answers of the Christian message into a more dynamic relationship with them. Here, we return to Tillich's approach to cultural analysis to show how the arts and literature hold promise for correlating the theological categories of the grid with lived experience and for encouraging personal encounter.

Using the Correlational Grid to Reveal the Questions of Existence in Relation to the Answers of Christianity

Christian education that follows the correlational design offered by the grid assists educators in making use of the questions of existence to express the meaning of Christianity. By linking together the questions of the human predicament with the answers of Christianity, Christian educators can explore a variety of relationships, both personal and cultural, to illustrate the

redemptive power of Christianity. In the spirit of the theological method of correlation and with awareness of the presence of God as one who corresponds with human selves, the correlational grid may be used to prepare the way for personal encounter with God in Jesus Christ. By bringing theological vocabulary and concepts into a dynamic relationship with the fundamental human situation, persons may gain confidence in relating the Christian story and symbols to life. Gaining confidence in theological reflection in this way is vital to strengthening one's sense of Christian identity.

Here I offer two examples of utilizing the correlational grid to illumine theological concepts. Following the lead of Tillich's cultural analysis, I will focus on the arts and literature to explore the correlations represented in the correlational grid. The first example is a classic story from literature, A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens.¹ The second example draws from a combination of music and visual art, making use of two songs from the musical drama Sunday in the Park with George.² This musical centers on the painting Sunday in the Park by La Gran Jatte by Georges Seurat, thus combining two forms of art into one. While theories of art and literature are beyond the scope of this dissertation, the usefulness of art and literature in education for Christian identity is not.³ Therefore, let us proceed with an

¹ Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol (1843; reprint, New York: Bantaam Books, 1986).

² Sunday in the Park with George: A Musical, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, written and directed by James Lapine, RCA Records, 1984.

³ For a very insightful and helpful discussion of theories of art, particularly of how drama and film assist in psychological transformation, see Ronald W. Baard's "Beyond Illustration: A Method for Using Drama and Film in Pastoral Counseling" (Ph.D. diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1995).

examination of these two examples and their force for Christian education. Concluding remarks and proposals will follow these analyses.

Christian Redemption of the Past, Present and Future
through the Eyes of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol"

Charles Dickens' book, A Christmas Carol (1843), is well known and works its transformation yearly as it has become a traditional part of many persons Christmas celebrations. Part of its popularity is due no doubt to its power to put people in touch with the three dimensions of time, not only of Ebenezer Scrooge's life, but of their own lives as well. Since the story makes use of the three dimensions of time (past, present and future) as keys to redemption, it is a fitting story to illustrate the spirit of Christianity which I have tried to incorporate into the correlational grid. Further, the polarities of self-affirmation and self-negation are present in this Christmas tale. They are expressed in the transformation of Scrooge, who emerges as a person of faith, hope and love. As Scrooge's transformation much in common with the dynamics of the grid, let us look at the elements of transformation in the story.

Ebenezer Scrooge is a man locked into the world of his own choosing. His life is dominated by miserly defensiveness and cold isolation. Dickens described him as

hard and struck as flint, from which not steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait, made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.⁴

On Christmas Eve his former associate, the dead Jacob Marley, visits Scrooge to warn him of his fate to wander the earth in chains as penance for

⁴ Dickens, 6.

all the goodness he withheld in life. Marley explains his suffering and raises the question with remorse, "Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to the poor abode?"⁵ Marley's ghost arrives to offer Scrooge "a chance and hope" of escaping his own fate.⁶ That chance and hope are offered in the three Spirits who visit Scrooge; the Spirits of Christmas past, present and future.

The Spirits take Scrooge to scenes from his own past, present and future, and show him events from those Christmases which were both formative and exemplary of the man Scrooge had become. By going with Scrooge into the "totality of his existence in time" the Spirits serve as the personal and transcendent presence which enables the release of those memories and qualities which made Scrooge into an isolated, defensive and estranged man. In each sphere of time, Scrooge must meet who he was, who he has become and his future fate.

In his visit to Christmas past, the Spirit encourages Scrooge to look at those scenes from his life which he had long forgotten. He visits the bitter and sweet experiences of his childhood and youth, and recalls the deep feelings he had buried: feelings of being a son rejected by his father, feelings of being loved by his only sister, feelings of appreciation for the generosity of his former employer Fezziwig, the love he once had for his sweetheart Belle. He also sees the beginning of his compulsive desire for procuring and hoarding wealth and the roots of his bitterness. As each of these scenes is visited, Scrooge expresses the guilt he feels from withholding money, love and power

⁵ Dickens, 21.

⁶ Dickens, 21.

from those in his current world: turning away the fund-raisers for charity knocking at his door Christmas eve, shunning his nephew's invitation to Christmas dinner, belittling his nephew's marriage, and oppressing Bob Cratchit with a poor work environment and low pay.

In terms of the correlational grid, Scrooge's guilt is exemplary of his moral anxiety. The Spirit need not condemn Scrooge in order to reveal the moral choices he has made. The Spirit simply has to show Scrooge his lost relationships and his subsequent isolation, in order for him to begin to face his past, present and future. This confrontation of himself with himself, is so intense that by the journey's end Scrooge can barely stand it. He cries out to the Ghost "Remove me! . . . I cannot bear it." But before the scene comes to an end, Dickens relays how Scrooge "turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it."⁷

Confrontation as a component of change is important to the reformation of the personality. In its emphasis on naming experience in terms of certain themes, the correlational grid assists persons in confronting their lives. There is a confrontation of sin and suffering in the cross of Christ. As persons allow this symbol of confrontation to address their lives, they may acknowledge and come to terms with their moral suffering. Faith in the cross means coming face to face with "all the faces" of the self which have prohibited the full realization of human purpose. Facing them with the help of God, who is present as a support and as one who reflects back the goodness and sinfulness of oneself, plays an important role in self-acceptance. As persons come to accept their lives through faith, they experience freedom

⁷ Dickens, 40.

from self-rejection and can claim new purpose through self-affirmation. This being the case, we can begin to see the correlation of faith in Christ through the unfolding story of Ebenezer Scrooge.

The second Spirit who visits Scrooge is the Spirit of Christmas present. This Ghost takes Scrooge to look at the world as it presently is, but which Scrooge has chosen not to see. The Ghost of Christmas Present first appears in Scrooge's living room, newly transformed from its dull and hollow appearance to a room glistening with living evergreens and berries, luscious foods and shimmering bowls of punch. The Spirit from upon this throne of holiday delicacies "bore a torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peering round the door."⁸

Scrooge is desirous of the lesson this Ghost has to offer him. Recollecting the movement in his personality wrought by the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge anticipates further growth. Having met his past self honestly, he is willing and ready to keep the transformational process in motion.⁹

Guided by the Spirit, Scrooge visits people who are important to his life. There is a world of the senses and simple pleasures that bring comfort and joy to persons in spite of the poverty and suffering of their experience. The Spirit shows Scrooge a view of the town and townspeople which suggests that, at least at Christmas, there is an openness and a sensuality to be found in the present in spite of the cold, the soot and the debt that permeate life. The Spirit shows Scrooge the air of good will, the avoidance of quarreling and the celebration of the blessings of life that come alive in common people at

⁸ Dickens, 43-44.

⁹ Dickens, 44.

Christmas. Even the home of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's much oppressed employee has the aroma of celebration and good will.

In another scene Scrooge enters the home of his nephew whose love for his uncle is unbiased and never failing. In this scene persons are gathered for a Christmas dinner party. It is the same party that Scrooge had declined to attend earlier that day. Now present at the party, the invisible Scrooge is caught up in the Christmas activities. He acts as if he is really there, enjoying the art of participation and fellowship with others. He becomes so present to the silly games and laughter of the party that he pleads with the Ghost not to make him leave. "One half hour Spirit, only one!" he cried.¹⁰

As the journey through Christmas present comes to an end, having seen and experienced something of the love that is Christmas, Scrooge notices the longing and grief of the world symbolized in two hideous looking children who clung to the Spirit's plush green robe. "'Have they no refuge?' cried Scrooge. 'Are there no prisons?' said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. 'Are there no workhouses?'"¹¹ Scrooge's brush with the meaning of love has stung him as the Spirit helps him to recall his own cold words and unforgiving words.

Scrooge's journey to the present engages him with the love of being human. The spiritual anxiety of emptiness, represented here in the juxtaposition of his real life with what life could be, can be seen in the correlational grid which links meaning and love. For Scrooge, the anxiety of how to fit in and how to avoid fitting into the world of others dissipates into an earnest interest and care for others. The Spirit of Christmas Present goes

¹⁰ Dickens, 62-63.

¹¹ Dickens, 64.

with Scrooge into the present time and enables him to participate in the joy and also in the concerns of others (remember Tiny Tim's illness). Forgetting himself for a time, Scrooge forgets the emptiness that fills his own soul. He engages the present moment and feels the support of human fellowship.

In terms of the correlational grid, the Spirit of Christmas Present stands with Scrooge, like Christ stands with persons, to open the way to love. As Brunner put it, "love is just being there and acting."¹² The Spirit of Christmas Past shows the link between Scrooge's own defensive miserly posture and the lost loves of his childhood and youth. All meaning had shifted into collecting and counting money. But this was very limited meaning, linked to his compulsive behavior rather than to any creative acts of meaning. As his nephew put it, "His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking –ha, ha, ha! – that he is ever going to benefit US with it."¹³ Scrooge responds to his spiritual anxiety with compulsive behavior, much in the way legalism fends off moral anxiety (as Tillich pointed out). As Scrooge encounters those near to him, seeing their joy and care for each other, his defensive posture begins to relax. The Spirit thus helps Scrooge to see the way of love. This confrontation with love opens the way for Scrooge to leave behind his compulsive, miserly and empty life.

Scrooge's heart is not unmoved by his new experience of the present. He continues to want to learn more of the lesson the Spirits would teach. Fearful about the future that will come to pass if he remains unchanged, Scrooge encounters the third and final Ghost, the Ghost of Christmas future.

¹² Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love, 61.

¹³ Dickens, 58.

Ghost of the Future!" he exclaimed, "I fear you more than any Specter I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me? . . . Lead on!"¹⁴

The Spirit of Christmas future goes with Scrooge to show him the fate that awaits him and others in his world if indeed Scrooge remains unchanged, cold and defensive. In scenes which vividly portray the true feelings of those around him, Scrooge encounters the outcome of his life. In one scene he observes his own corpse and hoodlums who take whatever they can from it and from his meager house to pawn. Scrooge listens to their

"dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil. . . he [Scrooge] viewed them with a detestation and disgust, which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself."¹⁵

Aware that this would be the likely outcome of his selfish life, Scrooge becomes more deeply fearful of his death.

Transported to another scene, Scrooge once again observes the love of the Cratchit family. This time the Cratchits' love is expressed as sadness at the death of Tiny Tim and in the joint relief felt at the death of, presumably, Ebenezer Scrooge. The Ghost takes Scrooge past his office and his home to point him into the cemetery and to his own grave. With this confrontation with death which represents the fundamental threat to his life, the fearful Scrooge comes to terms with the limits of his life. As the spirit shows him his own name on a cemetery grave, Scrooge chooses the way of life. He cries to the Spirit:

¹⁴ Dickens, 66.

¹⁵ Dickens, 72.

Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. . . . Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life.¹⁶

By moving into the future with the presence of the Ghost of Christmas yet to be, Scrooge encounters the anxiety of fate and death and claims a different end through hope. With a vision of what can yet be for him, for Tiny Tim, for Bob Cratchit and the lot, Scrooge becomes a new man with a new vision of a life of love. His vow is to "live in the Past, the Present and the Future!"¹⁷ The Spirit of the Future, like the resurrected Christ and his promised return, helps Scrooge to make a claim not only for a new future, but for a new present also. As he awakens to Christmas morning Scrooge is a new man. He feels "light as a feather," and "merry as a school-boy."¹⁸ So thankful that he is still alive, that the Spirits have done their work all in one night, that he still has a chance to live and to love, Scrooge finds the totality of his life, past, present and future, redeemed. Scrooge turns away from his miserly ways to a generosity that rejoices in the giving. As the expression of his newfound life, Scrooge dances through the house in exaltation, sends a giant turkey to the Cratchits, gives Bob a raise, vows to help Tiny Tim and goes home to his family for Christmas dinner!

In this story, Scrooge met the moral, spiritual and ontic anxieties of the estranged self in the three dimensions of time. All of those times were redeemed as the Spirits helped Scrooge to face his life. They brought Scrooge

¹⁶ Dickens, 79.

¹⁷ Dickens, 81.

¹⁸ Dickens, 81.

to the brink of condemnation, emptiness and death. In doing so, they helped him to choose faith, hope and love.

A Christmas Carol illustrates the categories of the correlational grid. It paints a picture of the situation of estrangement as it was experienced by one man, who although fictitious, is a good example of the paradigm of estranged humanity. Dicken's story fittingly illustrates how the totality of existence is held in the spheres of past, present and future and in their inter-relatedness. This story not only reveals the Christian message, but assists persons in accessing its message in relation to the human predicament. When put beside some of the classic biblical passages that give witness to the incarnation, we can better understand the interior struggles of persons of faith and the struggling fellowship of the early Hebrew and Christian communities. Such theological analysis of A Christmas Carol may open access to the meaning and spirit of the Bible. As persons gain a sense of familiarity with the grid, the story and the Bible, their capacity to correlate predicament with theme will emerge.

The type of literature that Christian educators choose for the purpose of preparing the way for Christian encounter is important. It is important that they choose literature which examines some theme found within the correlational grid. Familiar and unfamiliar literature can be used effectively. Using new and unfamiliar literature may provoke an immediate response to the themes presented and elicit interest. Using familiar literature is also helpful. While using familiar material, such as A Christmas Carol, runs the risk of making it seem trite, (this is true of biblical and non-biblical literature as well), there is also a wisdom in using such material. It may give people the comfort they need to get started and, also, challenge them to look beneath the familiar to the fundamental dynamics of their lives and of Christianity.

The Correlation of Ontic, Spiritual and Moral Anxiety
with Hope, Love and Faith in Two Songs from
"Sunday in the Park with George"

Let us now examine another artistic expression which can be analyzed in relation to the correlational grid. Here we will examine two songs from the musical drama Sunday in the Park with George, inspired by the painting A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte by Georges Seurat (1859-91).¹⁹ These examples combine the visual art of the painting with the lyrical art of song. As we shall see, this example has a less obvious relationship to the grid as does A Christmas Carol, and yet it may for this very reason present the dynamic of correlation better. Since it falls into the correlational categories in a less organized fashion, it emphasizes the correlational dynamic which is at the heart of the educational approach presented here.

Before moving to the two songs, we will explore the painting inspired them. In the painting A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, the French neo-impressionist Georges Seurat "perfected a technique of painting that came to be known as Divisionalism or Pointillism."²⁰ This technique involved painting with tiny strokes, creating dots of pure color which, from a distance, merge in the viewer's eyes to create luminescent colors and forms. A Sunday Afternoon presents nineteenth-century Parisians strolling through a park alongside the River Seine.

The diversity of characters in the painting, and the dramatic color and light inspired the two songs to be presented here. These songs are part of the larger

¹⁹ This painting hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago.

²⁰ Kimball, preface to program jacket of Sunday in the Park with George, 3.

dramatic musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, which was also inspired by the painting and its creator Seurat. Largely a fictional story, Sunday in the Park with George brings alive both the passion of the artist and the figures he painted. The songs presented here are analyzed in light of the correlational grid, and not from within the larger context of the play. This re-contextualization will help us to focus on the theological themes and the human predicaments which are of central concern to this paper. The songs are to be heard with this amazing painting in mind.

The two songs considered here are entitled "Sunday" and "It's Hot Up Here." Both have the picture of the park in mind. Both are sung from the point of view of the characters within the painting. Both play on the theme of eternity. "Sunday" explores the characters' sense of the timeless beauty and richness of life, experienced at once in its complexity and in its simplicity through a kind of holy ordinariness. In "It's Hot Up Here" the characters take on the perspective of powerless and victimized people, stuck in the painting in a kind of hellish ordinariness. The juxtaposition of the two songs assists in showing the polarities of empty and meaningless lives, and lives filled with meaning and love. As such, they open access to the relationships described in the correlational grid and by doing so, the Christian message is made relevant to the predicament of estrangement. Let us turn first to "Sunday."

Prefaced by the artist's words, which conjure the painting,²¹ the figures in the painting sing as they stroll through their "perfect park." Attentive to each dot of color and to the shape of each dot which gives them their existence, the strollers see in the ordinariness of their "small suburban park," their "forever." Grounded in the reality of the shapes and colors, light and

²¹ The words are order, design, tension, balance and harmony.

shadows that make up their world the figures are free to pass through the park. They are able to take in the coolness of the water and the softness of the grass as they move toward "the verticals of trees" which point the way to eternity. Neither captured by the park or bored with it, they see the perfection of the park enhanced only by the fact of time: that it is Sunday, the day off.

Such is the experience of life when love breaks through to the present moment in the fluid forms of "order, design, tension, balance and harmony." The spirit who guides the people of this painting toward wholeness is no visible spirit, as in A Christmas Carol. Here the spirit is found in the harmonious fellowship which "springs forth" freely. There is no need for a "guide" here, for the people already "see" their reality and connect with it, forever. In this peaceful, yet passionate presentation, we recall the spring-like quality of agape and the "just being there and acting" quality of Brunner's "present." Love is made present to the moment as the figures sing and are finally joined by their creator's voice, George. The painting and the song are analogical to the Christian message, but they are more than simple analogy. They evoke the experience of the love of God through the experience of the senses and sensibilities found in these characters. Like Scrooge, who woke up to the real world, these figures see the world too, and they draw the listener/viewer into the beauty and love of that world.

In the song "It's Hot Up Here" we meet the same characters as in "Sunday," but here they have broken fellowship and are estranged from each other, each stuck in their own spot in the painting. The peace and beauty of the park disintegrate as the human need for life and movement break forth in the heat. Frozen into position in a framed canvas under the heat of the lights on the wall, the characters ability to enjoy the coolness of the park begins to melt. The immortality of their situation only intensifies it. Stuck in

the painting, they cannot see their situation, much less escape from it. This offers us a view of the question of estrangement and the anxiety it brings.

Each figure in turn complains about his or her location in the scene and his or her situation within it. Louise has lost her glasses and can't see. Celeste can't stand the dress she's in. The soldiers complain of the weight of the helmets upon their heads. The boatman complains of these people who are forever complaining. Dot simply hates them all. The isolated complaints soon turn into snide remarks to each other and outright bickering. Periodically all join in a single chorus of "It's hot up here, forever." There is no fun, no breath of fresh air, no movement in their lives. Just heat and doom.

The characters' awareness of the meaninglessness of their situation is punctuated only by the soldier who finds it good to be with his companion again, to the disdain and disinterest of the others. Even the pleasure of "knowing your immortal" is eclipsed by the fact that forever "you're listening to drivel" and "bored beyond endurance." The characters' efforts to make the best of a bad situation fail one by one. Dot ventures to address her creator in an appeal. She expresses her dissatisfaction to George and asks for some alteration of her situation which is characterized by an unstylish hem and a leashed monkey. But, Dot undercuts her appeal as she softens the plea of her own case by realizing the benefits George has given her over the others; her good position in the shade, and the hat. In like manner, the other characters also persist in trying to make the best of a bad situation, saying: "there are worse things than sweating by a river on a Sunday"; especially "when you're sweating in a picture that was painted by a genius." But, these efforts degenerate quickly in the heat and stillness.

The anxiety presented in this song crosses the boundaries of all three types of anxiety. The characters are destined (the anxiety of fate) to remain stuck in their places, forever. The fact that they are alive does not mean that they are living. The ontic affirmation of vitality becomes murky with the ambiguity between life and death. Cut off from vitality, the characters encounter the meaninglessness of their situation. Try as they might, the heat overpowers their ability to find any meaning that would adequately alleviate their meaningless irritability. This spiritual anxiety is compounded by the moral anxiety which is expressed in their perceived victimization. They cannot overcome the meaninglessness of their situation by exerting choice and responsibility. Condemning themselves and each other, these characters draw us into the full-felt spectrum of anxiety. The characters finally proclaim: "Perspectives don't make sense up here. It's tense up here forever. The outward show of bliss up here is disappearing dot by dot. And it's hot!"

Both illustrating and incarnating the dynamics of the three types of anxiety, the painting and songs may help students to become more aware of the kind of questions to which Christianity is the answer. In this way, they become a means for helping students to become more aware of the questions of existence. Used in the context of theological discussion, the songs and painting could evoke awareness of the existential situation that people find in their lives and community. Likewise, the need for faith, hope and love to redeem the situation can be creatively explored. By uncovering the common ground between the types of anxiety presented here and personal experience, and linking by them with the history of Judeo-Christian religious experience of the situation, education in the dynamics, concepts and vocabulary of Christianity could be furthered.

Benefits of Using the Arts and Literature to Explore the
Theological Relationships within Correlational Grid

The positive use of the arts and literature holds great potential to draw persons into new experiences, not only through the interpretive tool of the grid, but also through the media itself. Caught up in the spirit of the story, or of the song, or of the visual effect of a painting, persons may dwell a bit more deeply with what is presented there. They may begin to see in new ways the connections between their lived world and the holy, between the questions of the human predicament and the answers of Christianity. The experience and analysis of the arts is thus a good way to explore the theological categories of the grid. Further, students can concretize their own experiences in creative expressions. Music, visual art and literature are just a few of the media through which creative expression may come. Kinesthetic experiences like dance and sport, three-dimensional art media like paper, clay and metal, and the written expressions of poetry, biography and autobiography have not been explored here but could well be included as part of the many ways that theological and cultural analysis may be enhanced. Inviting students to express their experiences in these ways may help them to become more aware of the predicaments of their own lives and community, as well as their experiences of faith, hope and love.

Remembering Tillich's Warning
about "Religious" Resources

The examples I have offered in this chapter express what Tillich called the religious dimension in existence, but neither are religious in style.²² This is

²² While A Christmas Carol does have *some* overtly religious style (its location being "Christian England," and Christmas as a Christian celebration which figures highly in it), the story is of a secular man who converts not to the religious forms of Christianity, but to the "depth dimension" of it.

not meant to imply that biblical stories and overtly religious art should be overlooked as rich resources for linking people with the questions of human existence and answers of Christianity. Indeed, an emphasis on them, in conjunction with more culturally accessible materials, is vital if persons are to make the connections which make Christianity personally and culturally meaningful. The use of biblical stories and religious art are important if the categories of the grid are to help educate persons in the theological tradition that is so important to Christian identity. But, Tillich's insights on the four levels of relationship between religion as ultimate concern and art need to be remembered.²³ Art that is religious in content may be devoid of religiousness in substance and style. If this is the case, it "dangerously irreligious"²⁴ and should be avoided. Such art may lure people into thinking it is religious when it lacks the depth dimension of which religion is about.

The correlational grid can be used to organize biblical and non-biblical resources alike in Christian education. The necessary ingredient is to be found in making a connection with the Spirit of Christ, as we meet him in the New Testament and in the Christian community, with lived experience. The literary and artistic examples offered in this chapter simply serve as illustrations of how the grid might be used to support a correlational approach to Christian education.

Likewise, other categories may well be developed to deepen the relationship between predicament and theme exemplified in the grid. Indeed

²³ These four levels are: art with non-religious style, non-religious content; religious style, non-religious content; non-religious style, religious content; religious style, religious content.

²⁴ Tillich, "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," 98.

Sherrill's attempt to put basic Christian doctrines in relationship with human predicaments does this, and his work has inspired the ideas here. I chose to develop the grid in a simple way because the types of anxiety so well describe the human situation, even as faith, hope, and love describe the fundamental experience of Christian existence. While my analysis of A Christmas Carol, "Sunday" and "It's Hot Up Here" show ways the grid might be used to reflect on the arts and literature in Christian education, I hope that it has also illuminated the spirit of the grid. An overly wooden use of the grid would rob its potential of engaging persons with the theological depth of Christianity. This would be as disastrous as being painted into immortality and stuck there without meaning, forever.

Conclusion

This study has been concerned with the issue of education for Christian identity. From the outset I have hoped to articulate an approach to Christian education that would affirm the importance of theological resources for Christian education, while recognizing that the significance of Christianity lies not in the resources themselves, but rather in God's redemptive presence. As Brunner said, "The Word of God in its ultimate meaning is thus precisely not "a word from God," but God in person, God himself speaking, himself present, Immanuel."²⁵ And yet, an important link exists between the words, concepts and symbols which communicate God's presence and the actual presence of God. Of this reality, Brunner said that God's presence, "the reality itself," can only be grasped within a doctrinal framework. While "God, to be sure, does not deliver to us a course of lectures in dogmatic theology. . .

²⁵ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 132.

we can never separate the abstract framework from the personal Presence contained in it, although certainly we must differentiate them."²⁶

In the introduction to this dissertation, I raised the issue of the crisis in Christian identity in American Protestantism and its relationship to the erosion of theological knowledge and theological self-understanding in the church. When people are inadequately educated as to the meaning of Christianity—its symbols, concepts, and contexts, Christian identity becomes fuzzy and confused. The current crisis of Christian identity among Protestants has sent some looking for a new sense of identity. Many are pursuing renewed identity by looking in varying directions: some through social reform and a supporting dogma of political correctness; others through embracing a rigidly authoritarian, theological (or liturgical) dogmatism; yet others through privatized experience which is essentially cut off from the larger social and theological picture. Not only are churches experiencing crises in Christian identity, but society at large seems to be experiencing a crisis in meaning generally. If Christian education is to assist in recognizing and remedying these crises, then education about the meaning and relevance of Christianity must be central to its work.

In the second chapter of this paper I analyzed two significant approaches to Christian education, those of enculturation and of shared-praxis, in order to surface key issues in developing better Christian theological education. Both approaches fall short of adequately handling the theological component of Christianity. What is needed is a more integrating approach to communicating the theological resources of Christianity, an approach that includes more adequately both the "why" and the "what" of Christianity as key factors in educating for Christian identity.

²⁶ Brunner, Truth as Encounter, 133.

The sources that I have embraced to engage this task include the method of correlation, the theology of personal encounter and their accompanying educational methods. Paul Tillich, Lewis Sherrill and Emil Brunner, each in their own way, recognized the important link between ideas, symbols, relationships, experience and Christian identity. I have attempted to recognize some of their fundamental contributions to the church by creating an approach to Christian education which harmonizes the need for intellectual understanding with the need for being personally known. Both are significant components of Christian identity. The method of correlation, the principle of correspondence and the idea of truth as encounter all assist in making Christianity meaningful in these ways for our time.

The correlation approach presented here is an attempt to integrate these contributions into a useful approach for Christian education. The examples given in this chapter as to how the grid might be used to assist students in exploring correlations of their own, show only a few of the ways the grid can be used to examine works of literature and the arts. Whether through analysis of a book or a poem, a painting or a sculpture, or a symphony or a song, the grid may help students and teachers to join together in seeing and creating new connections between the Christian message, their lives and the world. The self-affirmation which defines Christian identity is a process which engages the total self. The mental, physical, spiritual and social dimensions of the human self work together to make sense of the world and to orient people to it. Therefore, this approach encourages the use of a wide range of media through which the personal, cultural and theological analysis can take place.

No single solution can be offered to correct the crisis in Christian identity, but an approach such as I have suggested may at least refocus the concern of

Christian education toward education for Christian identity. The voices of the not so long ago past are still vital for hearing the meaning of Christianity for our time. My conviction is that they hold important keys for understanding and meaningfully communicating the essential "criteria of Christianity" as Brunner would say. My greatest hope is that the correlational approach presented here may support persons in coming to understand Christianity as coherent, interesting and relevant, both for personal life, and for understanding and shaping our culture which does so much to form us. By utilizing the arts and literature as media for better understanding the dynamics of Christianity in its relevance for the human predicament of estrangement, persons may learn what the Christian message is about and how it makes an important contribution to human experience. Such knowledge is preparatory for Christian encounter and strengthens theological self understanding.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Resources

- Boys, Mary C., and Thomas H. Groome. "Principles and Pedagogy in Biblical Study." Religious Education 77 (1982): 486-507.
- Brunner, Emil. Faith, Hope and Love. Earl Lectures, 1955. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956.
- . Truth as Encounter: A New Edition, Much Enlarged, of "The Divine-Human Encounter." Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943.
- Dickens, Charles. A Christmas Carol. 1843. Reprint. New York: Bantaam Books, 1986.
- Groome, Thomas H. "Christian Education for Freedom." In Foundations of Religious Education. Ed. Padraic O'Hare. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.
- . Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980.
- . "The Critical Principle in Christian Education and the Task of Prophecy." Religious Education 72 (1977): 262-72.
- . "Religious Education for Justice by Educating Justly." In Education for Peace and Justice. Ed. Padraic O'Hare. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983.
- . Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.
- . "Theology on Our Feet: A Revisionist Pedagogy for Healing the Gap between Academia and Ecclesia." In Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology. Eds. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
- Hauerwas, Stanley, and John H. Westerhoff, eds. Schooling Christians: "Holy Experiments" in American Education. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992.
- Little, Sara. "Theology and Religious Education." In Foundations for Christian Education in an Era of Change. Ed. Marvin J. Taylor. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976.

Little, Sara. To Set One's Heart: Belief and Teaching in the Church. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983.

Neville, Gwen Kennedy, and John Westerhoff. Learning through Liturgy. New York: Seabury Press, 1978.

Sherrill, Lewis J. "Deeper Changes in the Self." Pastoral Psychology 7 (June 1956): 51-55.

—. Family and Church. New York: Abingdon Press, 1937.

—. The Gift of Power. New York: Macmillan Co., 1955.

—. Guilt and Redemption. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1945.

—. "My Times." Union Seminary Quarterly Review 12 (May 1957): 3-7.

—. The Opening Doors of Childhood. New York: Macmillan Co., 1939.

—. Presbyterian Parochial Schools, 1846-1870. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932.

—. "Response to Edith Hunter's Article 'Woe unto Us Who are Biblically Literate.'" Union Seminary Quarterly Review 8 (Jan. 1953): 16-18.

—. The Rise of Christian Education. New York: Macmillan Co., 1944.

—. The Struggle of the Soul. New York: Macmillan Co., 1951.

—. "Survey of Recent Theological Literature: Religious Education and the Presbyterian Church." Union Seminary Quarterly Review 9 (Mar. 1954): 23-25.

—. "Theological Foundations of Christian Education." Union Seminary Quarterly Review Special Issue (Jan. 1951): 3-12.

—. Understanding Children. New York: Abingdon Press, 1939.

Sherrill, Lewis J., and John Edwin Purcell. Adult Education in the Church. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1939.

Sondheim, Stephen. Sunday in the Park with George: A Musical. Dir. James Lapine. RCA Records, 1984. Compact disc.

- Stroup, George. Jesus Christ for Today. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982.
- . The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.
- Tillich, Paul. "Art and Society." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . "Conformity." In The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society. Ed. J. Mark Thomas. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988.
- . The Courage to Be. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.
- . "The Demonic in Art." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . "Excerpt from The Religious Situation." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . "Honesty and Consecration in Art and Architecture." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion. Ed. Perry LeFevre. Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984.
- . On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. Trans. from German texts by Robert P. Scharlemann. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987.
- . "On the Theology of Fine Art and Architecture." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . "The Person in a Technical Society." In The Spiritual Situation in our Technological Society. Ed. J. Mark Thomas. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988.

- Tillich, Paul. "Protestantism and Artistic Style." In Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . "Religious Dimensions in Contemporary Art." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society. Ed. J. Mark Thomas. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988.
- . Systematic Theology. 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- . "The Technical City as Symbol." In The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society. Ed. J. Mark Thomas. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988.
- . "Theology and Architecture." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- . Theology of Culture. Ed. Robert C. Kimball. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- . "Thing and Self." In The Spiritual Situation in Our Technological Society. Ed. J. Mark Thomas. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1988.
- . "Visual Arts and the Revelatory Character of Style." In On Art and Architecture. Eds. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.
- Westerhoff, John H.. Bringing up Children in the Christian Faith. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980.
- . Building God's People in a Materialistic Society. New York: Seabury Press, 1983.
- . "A Changing Focus: Toward an Understanding of Religious Socialization." Andover Newton Quarterly 14 (1973): 118-29.
- . "Enculturation." In The Encyclopedia of Religious Education. Eds. Iris V. Cully and Kendig Brubaker Cully. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990.

- Westerhoff, John H. "Fashioning Christians in Our Day." In Schooling Christians: "Holy Experiments" in American Education. Eds. Stanley Hauerwas and John Westerhoff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992.
- . "Formation, Education, Instruction." Religious Education 82 (1987): 578-91.
- . Inner Growth, Outer Change: An Educational Guide to Church Renewal. New York: Seabury Press, 1979.
- . Living the Faith Community: The Church that Makes a Difference. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985.
- . "A Necessary Paradox: Catechism and Evangelism, Nurture and Conversion." Religious Education 73 (1978): 409-16.
- . A Pilgrim People: Learning through the Christian Year. Minneapolis: Seabury Press, 1984.
- . Tomorrow's Church: A Community of Change. Waco: Word Books, 1976.
- . Values for Tomorrow's Children: An Alternative Future for Education in the Church. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970.
- . Will Our Children Have Faith?. New York: Seabury Press, 1976.
- Westerhoff, John H., and O. C. Edwards, Jr., eds. A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis. Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1981.
- Westerhoff, John H. III, and Gwen Kennedy Neville. Generation to Generation: Conversations on Religious Education and Culture. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979.
- Westerhoff, John H., and William H. Willimon. Liturgy and Learning through the Life Cycle. New York: Seabury Press, 1980.

Secondary Resources

- Anderson, Bernhard W. Rediscovering the Bible. New York: Association Press, 1951.
- . The Unfolding Drama of the Bible: Eight Studies Introducing the Bible as a Whole. New York: Association Press, 1953.

- Baard, Ronald W. "Beyond Illustration: A Method for Using Drama and Film in Pastoral Counseling." Ph.D. diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1995.
- Burrows, Millar. An Outline of Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946.
- Eslinger, Richard L. "David Buttrick: A Phenomenological Method." In A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Methods. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.
- Fairchild, Roy W. "The Contribution of Lewis Sherrill to Christian Education." Religious Education 53 (1973): 403-11.
- Frankl, Victor E. Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy/ A Newly Revised and Enlarged Edition of From Death-camp to Existentialism. Trans. Ilse Lasch. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.
- Fromm, Erich. The Art of Loving. New York: Harper and Bros., 1956.
- Gaebelein, Frank E. The Pattern of God's Truth: Problems of Integration in Christian Education. New York: Macmillan Company, 1924.
- Harris, Maria. Teaching and Religious Imagination: An Essay in the Theology of Teaching. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987.
- Heyward, Carter. Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989.
- Howe, Reuel L. Man's Need and God's Action. Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1953.
- Hunter, David. Christian Education as Engagement. New York: Seabury Press, 1963.
- Lee, James Michael. "The Blessings of Pluralism." In Religious Pluralism and Religious Education. Ed. Norma H. Thompson. Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1988.
- . The Content of Religious Instruction: A Social Science Approach. Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press. 1985.
- LeFevre, Perry D. The Christian Teacher. New York: Abingdon Press, 1958.
- Little, Sara. The Role of the Bible in Contemporary Christian Education. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961.

- Loder, James E. The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981.
- May, Rollo, ed. Symbolism in Religion and Literature. New York: G. Braziller, 1960.
- Migliore, Daniel L. Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991.
- Miller, Alexander. Faith and Learning: Christian Faith and Higher Education in Twentieth Century America. New York: Association Press, 1960.
- . The Renewal of Man: A Twentieth Century Essay on Justification by Faith. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955.
- Miller, Randolph Crump. Biblical Theology and Christian Education. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956.
- . The Clue to Christian Education. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. Education for Continuity and Change: A New Model of Christian Religious Education. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.
- . Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Murphy, Maureen Mary. "The Contribution of the Psychological Approach of Lewis J. Sherrill to the Twentieth Century American Religious Scene." Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1973.
- Robbins, Vernon. Jesus the Teacher. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Schipani, Daniel S. Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology. Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1988.
- Scott, Kieran. "Three Traditions of Religious Education." Religious Education 79 (1984): 323-39.
- "The Service of Word and Table I, II, III, IV." In The United Methodist Hymnal. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.
- Seymour, Jack L., and Donald E. Miller. Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982.

- Smith, H. Shelton. Faith and Nurture. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1941.
- Verheyden, Jack. "The Invisibility of the Church in American Theology and the Issue of Catholic Reality." Lecture delivered at Kresge Chapel, School of Theology at Claremont, 25 Jan. 1994.
- Weeks, Louis, B. III. "Lewis Sherrill: The Christian Educator and Christian Experience" Journal of Presbyterian History 51 (1973): 235-48.
- Willis, George, and William H. Schubert, eds. Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry: Understanding Curriculum and Teaching through the Arts. New York: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Wright, George Ernest. God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital. Chicago: H. Regnery, 1952.
- Wuthnow, Robert. Christianity in the Twenty-first Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Wyckoff, D. Campbell. The Gospel and Christian Education. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959.
- . The Task of Christian Education. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955.